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THE

BATTLE ON THE BOSPHORUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE ENCAMPMENT.

About five leagues from the once important and flourishing city of Pisa, lies a valley of great beauty and fertility, though of circumscribed extent. The surrounding hills, of moderate height, are rich to their very summits in vegetation.

Winding through this valley, ran a clear and placid stream, which, shortly after, became lost in the wider and more classic waters of the Arno. On each side of this stream the pasturage was rich; and, at the period of our tale, about the middle of the fourteenth century, its whole extent was dotted with the white tents of a very large body of Condottieri.

These tents, however, were not scattered over the valley in picturesque confusion, as might be supposed from the nature and inclination of the reckless bands of mercenaries then spread over the lands of the South; but, on the contrary, were ranged in perfect order and regularity, round a very large octagon pavilion; over the summit of which waved the broad banner of St. George of England.

Though after this chapter we have nothing farther to do with the doughty Sir John Hawkwood — whose name was celebrated throughout Italy — we must introduce him

here. Within the centre pavilion, which was handsomely lined with crimson cloth, its pillars supporting arms and armour, were spread on a table several large, roughly-sketched charts; and, looking over these, sat the English knight and a young man about twenty-five years of age.

This latter cavalier had already given celebrity to the name of Paoli, having achieved extraordinary fame in his heroic defence of his country, Corsica; and also, during a period of two years, passed in fighting under the Pisan banner, when he received the honour of being created a Knight of St. Stephen's,—a military order then existing, and admitting only personages of high station and renown into their community.

Giacinto Paoli was remarkable for his height, immense strength, and extraordinary skill in the use of all warlike weapons. Singularly graceful in person, and eminently handsome, he won not only admiration by his personal ap-

pearance, but by the generosity and nobleness of his disposition.

"Now, Giacinto," said Sir John Hawkwood, laying down his dagger, with which he was tracing a road across a most intricate looking country, roughly sketched on one of the charts, "let me hear your adventures since we parted. I need not say how grieved I was on learning your noble father's fate, and the conquest of your native land by those crafty Genoese; a conquest they would never have achieved without the aid of France."

"In truth, Sir John," replied the young knight, "my adventures have little of interest. But as the recital will explain to you my reason for seeking service in the Venetian Republic, I will briefly relate them—

"My father, you are aware, was betrayed into the hands of the Genoese General, Mastino Campaldino, one of the most cruel, ferocious, and crafty commanders ever sent by Genoa into Corsica.

"I was retreating with my cousin, Otho Sampiero, who, you may remember, visited me for a short period at Pisa."

"A noble and high-spirited youth, indeed," interposed Sir John.

"We were retreating before an overwhelming force of Genoese and French," pursued Giacinto, "when news reached us that the strong fortress of Corte had fallen into the hands of the Genoese through treachery; and that my father, General Paoli, and Cicaldi, and several other brave chiefs had been taken prisoners, and barbarously executed on the walls of the citadel, as traitors and rebels, by order of Mastino Campaldino. I at once vowed never to sheathe my sword, or quit the island till I accomplished the death of the Genoese General, who had so cruelly put my father to death.

"I will not weary you with minute details. The overpowering force of Genoese and French, aided by swarms of vile adventurers, drove us

to the mountains for safety. The whole island submitted, after many towns, villages, and castles had been burnt and destroyed, and the inhabitants massacred.

"My cousin Otho and myself, with five hundred men, defied, for many months, all the efforts of the Genoese Commander to draw us out of our retreat. I was ardently waiting for an opportunity to avenge my father's death; and then fly from my unhappy country, which I could no longer defend.

"At length my scouts brought me word that Campaldino had left Corte, at the head of more than eight hundred Genoese and French. He was to be joined by a body of two thousand adventurers, outlaws, and assassins, shipped from the prisons of Genoa, and pardoned on condition of fighting against the Corsicans; Campaldino having sworn to drive us from our fastnesses, and massacre every man with arms in his hands.

"I now resolved to attack the Genoese

General as he and his force passed through the celebrated gorge of Gravellino—one of the most remarkable defiles in the Island. This singular gorge resembles a deep cut made by art through a mountain of rock; the sides being perpendicular. The pass is nearly a mile in length—the summits of the two sides being covered by gigantic pines.

"We reached this pass two days before Mastino. Cutting the immense pines nearly through, we supported them by ropes. Enormous rocks were loosened by the brave peasantry, who worked day and night. In fact, a fearful avalanche was prepared to overwhelm the Genoese force as it defiled through the gorge.

"The day on which I expected to destroy this cruel enemy to Corsica broke clear and bright. Not a breath of wind stirred the leaves of the low shrubs behind which I had posted my men; while two hundred peasants stood ready with their axes to cut away the ropes that held

the mass above. From where my cousin and myself were posted, we could see the entrance of the gorge. A note from my bugle was to be the signal to those above.

"As I anxiously fixed my eyes in the direction I expected to see the enemy advance, I heard the clear notes of the French horn break the perfect stillness that reigned around; and a very few minutes after, we beheld the glitter of arms. Singular enough for a soldier of Campaldino's experience, he led his forces into the gorge of Gravellino without any precaution. The band in advance was composed of adventurers, who marched without order or banner. After them, came the Genoese General at the head of his well-armed and disciplined soldiers. My squire, Pulini, who knew Campaldino, pointed him out to me amidst the group of officers; for, as yet, I had never encountered him. He was in complete mail, and rode one of the small Corsican horses.

"I allowed the Genoese force to enter the pass about half way before I gave the signal from my bugle. The instant the first note reached the ear of Campaldino, he ordered a halt: the next instant, the fearful avalanche of timber and rock came thundering down the mountain, uprooting vast masses of rock. It appeared as if the sides of the gorge had collapsed, so terrible was the scene. Hundreds were entombed beneath this awful mass of materials. In the midst of the horror excited by this unexpected event, we sallied out from our secure retreats on both sides, and fell upon the remnants of Campaldino's force. The Genoese General was himself unhurt, as I purposely allowed him and about three hundred of his men to advance beyond the critical spot. Recovering from his surprise, he offered a bold front, while those left alive of the adventurers fled wildly through the pass. I soon reached the side of Mastino, shouting my name, and my father's wrongs in his ear. Campaldino seemed

paralysed. Still he strove to defend himself, uttering some words which, in the excitement of the moment, I did not hear; and in less than five minutes, he lay slain at my feet. Mastino's son, and about two hundred of his followers contrived to escape; but the adventurers lost nearly half their number.

"After this, my force dispersed; for, having consulted Gaffieri and other Chiefs, we all agreed that at that time to prolong the contest would only bring greater misery upon Corsica. We therefore agreed to separate and get, as best we could, to the Continent. I then made the best of my way with only twenty men; and was guided by my attached follower Pulini into the pieve of Orto, my father's property. The mansion was in ruins, the land laid waste, and the town and villages burnt some time back by order of Campaldino. Here, in a secret place, my father had buried the family plate and jewels. Pulini, who is my father's foster-brother, knew the spot. This

practice of burying the family property is always resorted to by Corsican lords, in the event of an invasion. Here I separated from my cousin Sampiero, who set out for his own domain, intending to make his way with Gaffieri across to Sardinia, and agreeing, if we were so fortunate as to escape, to meet in Rome.

A short time after our separation, with six followers only, I contr ved, during a dark and stormy night, to cut away a Tartana from the harbour of Mariana; and the gale blowing from the coast of Corsica, we steered for the Italian shore. Accustomed, from my earliest years, to the sea, and passionately fond of the element, I found no difficulty in conducting my bark to Piombino. There I landed with Pulini, and whatever valuables I had dug up from our buried property. My countrymen then sailed for Sardinia, intending, after a time, to get back to their wives and families.

"At this period, I was only two-and-twenty years of age. When I left the city of Pisa

six years previously, you were fighting under her banner; and though then only sixteen, I obtained leave from my father, who was greatly attached to you, to practise arms under your eye; and to your watchful care and kindness, I owe my skill in them. I heard, on my arrival, that you were in the Milanese—Pisa was then at war with Florence. During two years that the war lasted, I fought fer her, gained some renown, and became a Knight of St. Stephen's. I then proceeded to Rome; and, to my infinite joy, heard from his kinsman, the Colonna, that my Cousin Otho had reached Rome in safety. But he was absent, not liking an idle life, and I resolved to follow up a project which my lamented father desired I should undertake, should he fall in the contest with Genoa, and I be forced to fly from the island.

"A short time previous to his setting out for the Citadel of Corte, my father said to me, 'Should it please Providence, my beloved son,

that I fall, and you are forced to fly your country, I know no better banner under which you can serve, than the Lion of St. Mark. In my youth I chanced to save, in Florence, the life of a Venetian merchant of great wealth, by name Tiepolo. We were nearly the same age; a friendship ensued; and for several months we traversed many parts of Italy together, till he recovered from his wound. We then parted —he to return to Venice, and I to Corsica. He pressed on my finger at parting,' continued my father, 'this valuable and splendid ring, which I now give you, saying at the time— *The possessor of this ring may command the fortunes of Tiepolo.*'

"Hearing in Rome that Venice was engaged in a fierce war with Genoa, I determined to set out at once for that far-famed city of the waves; but, having left my horses and arms at Pisa, I returned here, and was delighted and surprised to learn you had encamped in

this valley. I therefore at once resolved to pay you this visit on my way.

"So now, dear Sir John, you know my reason for wishing to serve under the banner of the Venetian republic—the war is against our old and bitter enemies; and the more they are crippled the better for Corsica, who may yet make a struggle for her liberty."

"Well, I trust in God she may," said Sir John, heartily; "for I love freedom, and I detest those crafty Genoese. But at all events, I have my doubts about their rivals, the Venetians. It is a Government I do not admire. I hate mystery. However, since your noble father wished you to take service under the 'Winged Lion,' I will not farther press my offer of five hundred free lances. Still, remember that should you get disgusted with the worthy ten Councillors of St. Mark, and I remain in the land of the living, they are still at your service."

Giacinto Paoli pressed the hand of the worthy English Knight, and expressed his thanks warmly.

"But now, my dear boy," resumed Sir John, "let me give you a brief outline of the state of this fair land wherein you are about to try your fortunes. No man can have had greater experience of the Italian character, their customs and political opinions and factions than myself. Sunk in sloth and luxury, the native princes and rulers have left their possessions at the mercy of numerous predatory bands, under various denominations. There are Black Bands and White bands, Condottieri, Companies of Adventurers, Free Lances, and German Barbuti. No matter what may be their names, their objects are the same. We are old rivals; only, thank God, my brave fellows are widely different from the others, who, when not engaged in war are othing better than robbers; fighting one day for a certain ruler, and the next daay quite

willing to cut his throat, provided they get well paid for it. So distracted, indeed, is this most unhappy land by dissensions amongst themselves, and devastations committed by foreign adventurers, that the terrified cultivators of the soil are compelled to live within walled towns. There is not a city in Italy that is not distracted by faction. Not even the great pestilence that swept over the whole face of Europe, cutting off from the earth a third of its population, was able to check this terrible disunion amongst the Princes of Italy. This very disunion, jealousy, and hatred of one another, is the cause of the formidable bands you will find dispersed over the whole of Italy, from north to south. Now, Genoa and Venice, amid this turmoil of party and faction, have risen to eminence, and their nobles and merchants, through commerce, are the wealthiest in the world. Not that these cities are free from faction, as you know yourself. Genoa is at times convulsed to its centre. Such is the

field, my dear boy, in which you have to try your fortunes. You are first going to Florence, and I think it most likely that I shall accept the offer made by that Republic. If not, I shall close with the Marquis of Montferrat's proposals. You see that range of hills marked on this chart," continued he, taking up one of the maps, and pointing out with his dagger a very dubious line of road across a most mountainous country, "you must avoid crossing those hills," added Sir John. "You see, by following the borders of this river," sticking, as he spoke, his dagger's point into a long, black serpentine mark—"you skirt the foot of the hills; and crossing that ferry which, by-the-by, I would for more than one reason advise you to do, you will pass more than a league from the camp of a notorious freebooter and his German barbuti."

"You mean, I suppose," interrupted Paoli, "the German condottieri-leader, Guarnieri?"

"The same," returned the English knight—

Duke Guarnieri, as the Italians style him. "You have heard, then, something of this scourge of the human race, for, in truth, such he is."

"Not much," replied Paoli; "merely some vague rumours while passing through Sienna. I heard it said that he and his troops were urging the Florentine Signori into a breach of the truce between their republic and the Marquis of Montferrat."

"No, no, you are out there," said Sir John. "But I will give you a very brief outline of this remarkable, but most detestable, chief's career. We have met once on opposite sides and it looks like as if we shall do so again. Duke Guarnieri is a German by birth. His real name is Werner, and he comes of a good, but impoverished, family. In person he is gigantic. In his youth, he is said to have been remarkably handsome. In early life, his character was noted for reckless bravery, and an extraordinary skill in the use of almost

every weapon. It seems he won the love of a very beautiful maiden, the daughter of a German baron of high descent, and carried her off. Such was the rage and vengeance of her powerful family that the lovers fled their country.

"Of his varied fortune for a long time little is known. Some years ago he made his appearance in Lombardi under the name of Guarnieri, and at the head of a most lawless band. Increasing, by degrees, his forces, he entered the service of the Lord of Padua. Some splendid actions, but blasted by the most atrocious cruelties, soon rendered his name notorious. His vices and detestable cruelties increased; his deeds and his actions, allowing for exaggeration, are more the acts of a fiend than of a human being. His wife, Hermangarde, accompanies him everywhere; and, I have heard, has saved many a victim from his lawless passions. He has one son—a greater *Diable, par excellence*, than his sire. Duke Guarnieri wears a cuirass, on which is engraved

in gold the impious and horrid sentence of 'Enemy of God, of Man, and of Pity.'* "

"Is this possible ?" exclaimed the Corsican, much astonished.

"Fact, my young friend," returned Sir John, "proud of his immense strength and stature—confident of the devotion of the five thousand well disciplined men he leads, he thinks nothing of forcing well fortified cities to pay him ransom. His boast is that no man ever yet withstood him in single combat. Such is Duke Guarnieri. Now if he, with his band, intend—which the Florentines are apprehensive he does—to traverse their territories, plundering and devasting, and extorting ransom from the various towns—we shall take the field in the pay of Florence. If not, and if he shapes his course towards the Paduan states, I shall

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* See Percival's History of Italy.

take the offer of the Marquis of Montferrat. Therefore, as I was pointing out to you the road, I think you may as well avoid altogether approaching the encampment of this Duke Guarnieri. Neither he nor his troop are over-scrupulous in levying contributions whether from travellers or cities, or strong bodies of armed pilgrims."

"Well as there is neither honour or glory to be obtained," replied Paoli, "in an encounter with this German freebooter, I will follow your advice, Sir John. After a few days' stay in Florence, I will proceed to Ravenna, and embark there for Venice."

"By St. George, Giacinto!" said the English knight, laughing, "if you serve long with those amphibious animals, the Venetians, you will forget what a good steed is. However, remember what I have offered you. Thank the stars these Italian princes have a happy knack of quarrelling and fighting their dif-

ferences out with any other swords than their own."

The following morning, after a most friendly and affectionate parting with the chivalric and true hearted Sir John Hawkwood, Sir Giacinto Paoli, and his squire resumed their journey to Florence.

CHAPTER II.

THE RENCONTRE.

The Corsican knight was mounted on a very powerful horse, of great spirit. In truth, it was necessary he should possess both spirit and bone to sustain the athletic frame of the rider cased in the splendid, but heavy, armour of the period.

His squire, Pulini, the foster brother of his father, and who was most devotedly attached to the son, was a strong, muscular man—in age about forty-six, and extremely well featured

and skilled in arms, having served with the elder Paoli in many a battle field. He was also well armed and mounted. They continued their road for some time along the smiling banks of the Arno, till they reached the ferry. Having crossed the river, they pursued a well beaten track, as a shorter road by a league to Bosco. Pulini remonstrated at taking short cuts; but Paoli, remarking that the day was intensely hot, and that the horses seemed to suffer, proposed taking a road that ran along the side of a thick wood, which looked most inviting. They continued their journey under the shade of the wood, which seemed of great extent, rising to some height on one part. Round the base of the hill ran a clear sparkling stream. It was now about noon; and Paoli, to refresh and rest the horses, determined to halt for an hour under the shade, and relieve them by letting them graze.

Having dismounted and looked round him

the squire observed, as he took his master's helmet and lance—

"We have got out of the right track Signor. The old ferryman who induced us to cross the stream by way of a short cut, told us to keep the wood on our right, and the marsh on our left; and, by St. Antony, we have, I see, reversed the direction."

"So I thought," returned Paoli, "when we turned to the left after passing the myrtle grove. But it is very little matter, the day is long."

Giacinto Paoli rambled up the mount to see if he could gain a view round its base. When half way up, he heard the tinkling of bells, like those then worn round the necks of mules. The sound came from the right, and seemed below him.

"Doubtless some travellers," thought the Knight, pushing his way through the myrtles, till he gained a view down into a little vale or glen, through which the rivulet ran. Beneath

him, scattered over the greensward, was a large party of travellers, evidently reposing and refreshing themselves. The group that first attracted his attention, was a party of five persons—three females and two males, among whom was an elderly dame, attired in the travelling costume of the times, her head divested of the enormous hood then worn. Amusing herself with adorning this good lady's head, was a very young girl, who was forming wreaths of wild flowers, and, in a playful manner, placing them on the dame's head.

Paoli was not fifty paces above them, though concealed from observation by the myrtles. The face of this young maiden, though she was not more than fifteen, struck him forcibly, from its exquisite loveliness. She was tall for her age; for, till she turned her sweet, Hebe face towards him, he supposed from her graceful figure and height, that she must be at least seventeen or eighteen years of age.

Giacinto gazed long and thoughtfully upon

the fair face of the maiden; for his young life, passed from his very earliest years amid the wild strifes of his native land, had afforded but little time or ease either for the enjoyment of society, or the cultivation of the limited accomplishments of that iron age. Still the Corsican was ever an admirer of beauty; and, for the period in which he lived, he was an accomplished cavalier; especially as the years spent in Pisa, with the Grand Master of the Knights of St. Stephen, with whom he was a prodigious favorite, were not always passed in iron mail and in fierce strife.

The young girl was simply attired in white; having thrown aside a wide mantle and a large Tuscan straw hat. Opposite the old dame, who seemed to enjoy the young girl's playful fancy, sat an old, but hale and hearty cavalero, who seemed to be intently occupied with the various articles of food spread out before him.

At a short distance from this party, sat another. This latter consisted of fourteen or fifteen armed retainers, while several mules, a close litter, and fifteen stout roadsters were picketed about the vale, cropping the short, sweet grass that grew on the banks of the rivulet.

While Paoli stood leaning against a tree, debating whether he should descend and accost the party below, his ear caught the jingling sound of armed riders coming from the other side of the abrupt hill or mound on which he stood. The party, below, also seemed to hear the sound, for the old cavalero laid down the cup he was drinking from, and listened.

Passing to the other side, Paoli gained a spot from which both sides of the mount were visible. He then perceived the cause of the sound he had heard, and beheld about twenty armed riders beneath, watering their horses in

the rivulet. By their arms and the crimson horsehair flowing from their helmets, he surmised they were German Barbuti.

No Condottieri forces at that period were more superbly armed than the Barbuti. Over their mail coats of interlaced chain, were cuirasses of highly polished steel. The cuirasses boots and cuisses were of the same material, and shone equally with the rest of their bright array.

A little in advance of the troop, rode a tall powerful man, similarly armed, only that, instead of horse-hair, he wore a rich plume of crimson feathers in his casque. This cavalero rode a little in advance so as to see round the angle of the mound.

As soon as he perceived the party we have described, he checked his horse and gallopped back to his troop, who were tightening the girths of their saddles. Some words which our hero did not hear, caused them at once to mount and follow their leader. But before

this, Paoli, who guessed some mischief would come of the meeting of the Barbuti and the old cavalero, turned back to where he had left Pulini, and found his squire bridling his horse.

"Follow me as fast as you can, Pulini," said the Knight, bracing on his casque and grasping his heavy lance. Without a word more, he galloped off round the mount.

"St. Antony! what's the matter now?" muttered the squire, (who well knew his master's impetuosity,) tightening his own girths and preparing to follow.

In a few moments, Giacinto Paoli had turned the angle of the hill, his speed being increased by the shouts and cries that filled the air. As he came into view of the scene, he perceived that the Barbuti had assaulted the party which had so interested him. The females were grouped together in terror. Neither the old Cavelero or his retainers had had time to mount; but were clustered together

offering but a faint and certainly most ineffectual resistance to the mounted German freebooters. The loud shout of the Corsican knight, as he urged his strong horse to full speed, attracted at once the notice of the leader of the troop, who, turning round, lowered his lance, and spurred his steed to meet this fresh antagonist. He rode a heavy, though singularly powerful German horse; but his opponent, celebrated for his power and skill with the lance, met him in full career; and though Paoli was shaken in his seat, and his horse staggered with the shock, he bore his assailant to the earth, with a mortal stroke of his lance through the neck, crashing with irresistible force through chain and mail.

Astounded and paralyzed by the fall of their leader—for he lay without the slightest motion on the sod—the Barbuti drew back, while several sprung from their horses, and raised the fallen man; but life was quite extinct. The rest, with shouts of rage, hastened

to revenge his death. By this time, Pulini had arrived sword in hand; and the old Cavalero's men taking advantage of the pause, hurried to their horses, mounted, and hastened to assist the knight. But Paoli had by this time dropped his lance, and seizing his heavy battle-axe, beat one of the foremost of the Barbuti from his horse. Seconded bravely by his squire, they stood the brunt of the assault till the old Cavalero and his followers rode up. The Barbuti then demanded a parley, finally consenting to retire if they should be permitted to carry off the body of their leader and their wounded comrades. They seemed to regard the power of the Corsican knight with surprise and rage; but evidently felt no desire to renew the strife.

Giacinto Paoli willingly acceded to this; and making the request of the Barbuti known to the party, the old Cavalero also assented.

Some of the troop then dismounted, and the

body of their leader, wrapped in a large mantle, being placed upon his horse, and the wounded assisted to remount, the whole party, without exchanging a word with their victors, rode slowly from the scene of their late contention.

No sooner had the Barbuti disappeared round the angle of the mount than the old Cavalero turned towards the Corsican, who had dismounted, and was examining his steed.

"A thousand thanks, Sir Knight," said he, "for your most opportune and gallant assistance. You have rescued yonder dear girl from the clutches of that incarnate fiend, Ludovico Guarnieri."

"Guarnieri!" echoed Paoli, with a start of astonishment.

"Even so," returned the Signor, gazing with surprise upon the youthful features of the Corsican, who just then had raised his visor. "But we must away, Sir Knight. I will explain as we ride. You have slain, *per Bacco*,

with a single thrust of your lance, one of the greatest pests in Italy, and accounted one of its best lances."

"Then I have slain the son of Duke Guarnieri—*Corpo di mondi!*" muttered Paoli, as he followed the stranger towards the ladies, "it is remarkable, notwithstanding Sir John's precaution, that I should have actually stumbled uyon the party I was endeavouring to avoid."

The old dame, now somewhat recovered from her terror, and assisted by the young maiden, on whom the eyes of Giacinto Paoli were bent with increased admiration, advanced to thank their deliverer. Both started back, equally surprised at seeing their rescuer so very young, his powerful and athletic frame, cased in mail, betokening a much more advanced age.

The old dame uttered her thanks with much feeling and emotion; but we much doubt if the sweet smile of the blushing girl, who held forth her taper fingers, which the Cor-

sican pressed respectfully to his lips, and which brought the bright blood of the maiden to her cheeks aud temples, was not a much richer reward than the eloquent harangue of the old dame.

The stranger, having now harnessed the horses to the litter, and arranged everything in order to resume their journey, approached, saying—

"I trust, Sir Knight, we ride the same road. We journey to Livorno."

"It grieves me to say," returned Paoli, "that my direction is Florence."

The stranger looked disappointed, but said—

"Our road lies for nearly a league the same. You have strayed from your course, if, as I imagine, you came from Pisa."

"I thought as much," replied the Corsican, as he mounted and rode on by the side of the old cavalero, who became very communicative.

He said his name was Sir Conrad Tolosino —that the old dame was his spouse—and the young maiden a distant relative committed to his care—that stopping for a week to recruit his spouse's strength, after a long journey, at Bosco, Ludovico Guarnieri, who happened to halt there with his troop, beheld, by chance, his charge Agnes. This Ludovico was notorious for his profligacy, and his outrageous violation of the laws, which he set at defiance. He made several attempts while at Bosco to intrude upon the privacy of the old cavalero's retreat; but as there was a strong body of Florentine men-at-arms there, the leader of which was an old friend of Sir Conrad, Ludovico found it better to desist, and leave Bosco; and the old knight thought he had got rid of him. But the German secretly watched his prey, and would undoubtedly have carried off the maiden but for the unlooked-for assistance of the Corsican.

In a short time, the party reached the spot

where their roads separated. The old knight and the two ladies took a friendly and grateful leave of their deliverer, Sir Conrad hoping, if ever he passed within ten leagues of the Castle of Averni, which lay within a league of Livorno, that he would remember that it belonged to one who would ever consider himself his debtor.

The old dame gave him her hand to kiss; and it was remarked, afterwards, by the sly attendant of the young maiden, who also rode within the litter, that there was a marvellous difference between the kiss the Corsican bestowed upon the young maiden's fair hand, and that with which he favored the hand of the ancient lady.

CHAPTER III.

DUKE GUARNIERI.

THE Corsican and his attendant, after their separation from Sir Conrad's party, pursued their journey for nearly a league in silence. The young knight was buried in thought—the image of the youthful Agnes was not likely to be forgotten; and he pictured to himself her beautiful and sylph-like form, rounded into womanhood, and brought to perfection by the passing of two or three years.

Very different were the ruminations of his

squire, who was inwardly congratulating himself upon their safe extrication from a contest into which he had followed his master, with very little hope of victory—when he beheld the band of armed men, whom his master had so madly, and without reason, as he conceived, attacked; for Pulini was not aware of Sir Conrad's party being the cause of the contest.

In the midst of the squire's self-congratulations, he was rather startled by hearing the sound of armed riders coming from behind.

Looking back, he perceived a cloud of dust in their rear rapidly approaching. With some vague apprehension of danger, he rode to the side of his master, saying—

"There are armed riders behind, Signor, coming up at a rapid pace."

"Travellers like ourselves doubtless," returned the knight, carelessly; "and if you look before you, you will perceive a cloud of

; likewise. Recollect this is the public road
reen Florence and Pisa."

By all the saints, Signor!" anxiously ex-
ned Pulini, "we are beset. The fellows
Barbuti."

he Knight cast a look behind; and, true
igh, he now clearly beheld a troop of German
outi, amounting to more than thirty men,
leisurely advancing towards them.

It's as well to be prepared," exclaimed
li, pulling down the visor of his casque,
grasping the lance Pulini held. "They
be only a party returning to the camp of
r leader.

Signor, for the love of the Virgin, and by
r hopes of ever serving our unhappy
ıtry, do not dream of forcing your way
ugh such a force. We are caught in a
e—they are Barbuti coming down the road
ur front."

'he squire was right; for another troop of

Germans rode rapidly towards them; and, in another moment, Paoli and his squire were surrounded by a troop of above sixty men-at-arms.

Rash and headstrong as the Corsican was at times, he, nevertheless, checked his steed, and throwing up his visor, quietly demanded of the leader of the band, who rode forward from the rest, the reason of his road being obstructed.

The German very coolly replied—they had orders from their leader, Duke Guarnieri, to bring the slayers of his noble son, dead or alive, into his presence.

"It remains with yourself, Sir Knight," quietly added the German, with a grim smile, "which way you prefer being presented to our chief."

The fiery blood of the Corsican Knight flew to his cheek and temples at the threatening manner of the German. But resistance would

have been madness. So making a virtue of necessity, he said—

"You leave me no alternative. Lead on; I will follow you. Though what your leader—"

"*Der Teufle*, Sir Knight!" interrupted the Barbuti, "you take it easy. I suppose you imagine the Duke wishes to thank you for slaying his only son, to save a puny damsel from a supposed insult."

"Lead on, sir," retorted Paoli, with an angry frown. "I will answer your chief, and not bandy words with you."

Having taken his sword and other arms, the Knight and his squire were placed in the middle of the troop, and then their horses were urged into a smart trot.

Our hero's thoughts were by no means pleasant. Having heard the character of Guarnieri from Sir John Hawkwood, he could expect nought but a stormy interview with the furi-

ous Duke. He regretted slaying his son; but, had he not done so, he would probably have lost his own life. He had only done his duty in assisting Sir Conrad Tolosino; he was bound in all honor to do so; and he was not expected to know that the cavalero who met him so furiously in the onset was Duke Guarnieri's son; and, even had he known it, it would not in the least have altered his intention.

Branching off from the main road, they pursued a bridle path; and, after an hour's ride, they came in view of Duke Guarnieri's encampment, which spread over a large extent of ground. Passing the outposts, they halted in the midst of the tents, and on alighting, were surrounded by hundreds of fierce-looking Barbuti. Pulini looked serious, and somewhat dismayed, though he only considered his master would be held to ransom.

"Now, Sir Knight, follow me," said the officer, who commanded the troop that had

captured Paoli; "you, Sir Squire, go with that page: he will take care of you," he added, with a grim smile.

Without uttering a word, Paoli followed the German to the entrance of an immense tent before which paced a sentinel. It was now quite dusk; and, as the Barbuti threw back the folds of the tent, our hero perceived it was lighted within.

"Enter, Sir Knight," said the German, with a malignant leer, "and any questions you may wish to ask, will meet a ready and quick answer."

With nerves braced to meet the worst, Paoli entered the tent, glancing with anxiety and curiosity over the wide space within which was hung with scarlet drapery, and ornamented here and there by groups of arms and armour. From the summit swung a brass lamp with four lights in it. The first object, however, that particularly attracted his attention, was the body of Ludovico Guarnieri, still

in his armour, stretched, in the rigidity of death, upon an oaken table in the centre of the tent. From the dead body of the son, Paoli raised his eyes to the motionless, statue-like form of Duke Guarnieri. It was impossible to mistake his remarkable and majestic figure, which seemed scarcely to breathe, as he stood with his right hand resting on a ponderous battle-axe, while his dark, piercing eyes were fixed in terrible meaning upon the youthful face and unshrinking gaze of the Corsican.

Guarnieri was cased in complete mail, excepting the casque: his cuirass bore the fearful inscription that has handed down to posterity a name hateful for the atrocities committed under it, in defiance of God and all human laws.

The Duke seemed evidently struck with the youthful look of his captive, contrasted with a figure and frame, which even beside his own gigantic figure, was remarkable for its noble proportions.

"They tell me, Sir Knight," at length uttered the Duke—"for I see you are of knightly rank—that you met my son, fairly and without vantage, with the lance, and that you slew him. Now, *I* say, the villains lie."

"Sir Duke," returned the Corsican, calmly, though his cheek was flushed, "they spoke the truth. I took no vantage of your son."

"'Tis false," furiously interrupted the Duke. "Ludovico Guarnieri never fell by the thrust of a lance, met fairly man to man. There lives not the man who could slay my son thus."

"Yet such was the case, Sir Duke."

"False Italian, you lie," roared Guarnieri, in a voice of thunder. "And for the accursed, foul deed you have this day done, you die—and by the hand of the father."

Grasping his huge axe, he was lifting it from the ground, when Paoli tore a weapon from the pillars, and prepared to defend his life to the last. Suddenly the drapery across the

tent was cast aside, and a female rushed forward, and threw herself on the uplifted arm of the Duke.

"Stay your hand, my lord, I implore you!" exclaimed she, in a voice inexpressibly soft and sweet. "Not here—not in cold blood, my lord! strike an unarmed captive! Nay," she imploringly added, as the Duke strove to free her arm from his grasp—"Nay, for the love I have borne you through years of a stormy life, stain not your hand with the blood of a helpless captive."

Giacinto Paoli stood in silent wonder and deep interest.

"Can it be possible," he thought to himself, as he looked with admiration, and even reverence, upon the striking form of Hermengarde, the Duke's consort—"Can it be possible that one so steeped in crime, so acted upon by furious passions, can retain the love of a woman thus animated by the noblest impulses?"

As Hermengarde ceased speaking, she leant her pale and marble brow against the iron-clad breast of her terrible husband. She appeared to shudder as she touched the steel which bore the fearful inscription on its surface. The arm of the Duke slowly relaxed its hold of the battle-axe, and the expression of his features softened, as he gazed down into the face of his sorely-tried spouse. Gently raising her head from his breast, he whispered some low words in her ear, and taking her by the hand, led her to the curtain, behind which, drawing it aside, Hermengarde retired.

The Duke turned back, and, looking the Corsican calmly in the face, said—

"Had I slain you, Sir Knight, where you now stand, I should only have done that which any other father would do to him who deprived him of his only child. You have slain my son, whether by fair means or foul, it now matters not. His body lies there before his father's sight, a lifeless mass of clay. I want not to

hear of your mad notions of chivalry and knighthood. These are times when a man's sword has quite enough to do to serve its master, and not thrust itself, uncalled-for, into other's quarrels. You cannot know what a father feels. But the deed is done; I trust to avenge my son's death."

"Be it so, Sir Duke," returned Paoli. "I fear no man in a just cause. I have, unfortunately slain your son; but the act was one of self-defence. Let me then stand before you in my knightly harness, and to God I leave the judgment."

A mocking laugh escaped the Duke's lips as he struck a steel cuirass suspended to one of the pillars of the tent, with his gauntlet. Two esquires entered the tent.

"Take this signor," said the Duke, "and, on your lives, be his safe keepers. Let him have food and wine, and restore to him his arms. To-morrow, at sun-rise, Sir Knight," he added, turning to Paoli, "I meet you in

the field; and if, after the expiration of one turn of the glass, you should be still alive, you are free."

And waving his hand, the two esquires hurried Paoli from the tent.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMBAT.

CONSIDERABLY astonished at the termination of an interview that had threatened his life so nearly, Giacinto Paoli followed the two squires from the pavilion, passing through groups of wondering Barbuti, till they came to the entrance of a tent, before which a sentry was stationed.

To his infinite joy, our hero beheld, within the tent, his squire Pulini, whose delight was great at again beholding his young master.

Here the squires left the Knight without uttering a single word.

While Giacinto was giving the amazed Pulini an account of his interview with the Duke, a young page entered the tent, carrying a salver stored with refreshment. He was a very fair and handsome boy, with a melancholy cast of feature.

"Sir Knight," said the youth, placing the salver upon the table, "a solitary chance of life has been given you. It is, alas! a poor one, strong and powerful as you look. The same chance has been given to others; but in half the time allowed, they ceased to breathe. But you are stronger of limb and stouter of heart than any I have yet seen contend with our leader. My mistress desires not your death, though you have killed her son. Ah, Sir Knight, if you but knew the kind, soft woman's heart our Duchess has, you would wonder—" and the page spoke in a very low tone, "how so fiendish a spirit could exist in

a son of hers. But, as I said, you have one chance of life. In your contest with the Duke, make no manner of attempt to hurt or wound him, even if it were possible that such an event could occur. Our leader's favorite weapon is the battle-axe. Prolong the fight if you can; but beware how you receive one single blow. No man ever required a second. Farewell, Sir Knight! From my heart I wish you well quit of this, in truth, terrible trial; for, as my mistress said, your peril arises from your having protected her sex; and your death could not restore her son to life."

"Thanks, fair page," said our hero, "both for your wish and your advice. Bear, I beseech you, my deep gratitude to your noble lady. Sorry am I, to the heart, that my hand was forced to do a deed, that has brought affliction and sorrow to her gentle heart."

When the page retired, Pulini, who had listened with great interest, exclaimed—

iron rule, with, alas! scarcely any hope of casting off the cruel yoke binding them.

Such, and many more, equally painful thoughts, tormented the young Knight for a time, till his squire persuaded him to seek a few hours' repose, on a simple couch of dried rushes and fern spread in one corner of the tent. Upon this he threw himself; and notwithstanding his thoughts and the trial of the morrow before him, fell into a sound sleep, from which he was roused by the entrance of one of the Duke's squires—who was greatly surprised at the Corsican Knight being able to enjoy sleep, when he considered his life not worth an hour's purchase.

Placing Paoli's sword and a battle-axe on the table, the squire said—

"My Lord will be ready for the contest in half an hour, and desires to know if you require any other weapon."

"Tell your master I thank him," returned the Knight, taking up, with evident pleasure,

his own good sword. "This has served me long and faithfully. It is a plain weapon, but none better was ever held in the hand of a soldier. As soon as I arm, I shall be ready for your master."

The squire retired with a significant smile on his features, while Pulini, looking serious and thoughtful, began arming his young master.

Paoli hastily broke his fast from the materials of the last night's meal, and drinking a cup of wine, was quite ready when the Duke's squire returned, requesting him to follow. Pulini took up his master's battle-axe and accompanied them, no notice whatever being taken of his proceedings.

It was a bright and glorious day, and the sun, as it rose above the hills that backed the Camp of Guarnieri, threw a flood of brilliant light into the vale below, and upon the steel-clad forms of countless men.

The young Knight followed his guide

through several ranks of silent soldiers, who, ranged in regular order, were drawn up to witness one of those sights which their leader was so proud of exhibiting to them. They were evidently struck with the noble bearing and fine stature of the Corsican, whose calm and handsome features, and glowing cheek, showed no signs of uneasiness.

Courage and gallant deeds in that iron age always commanded respect, even from the rudest breast. Excepting by his own personal squires and followers, Ludovico Guarnieri had been much disliked. Equally cruel and ferocious as his sire, he failed to win the love of the fierce Barbuti, for his nature was grasping and avaricious; and he manifested a proud and haughty indifference towards his men. His father, on the contrary, with all his vices, was lavish and profuse, fairly and affably sharing any spoil with his meanest soldier. Proud of his skill and extraordinary strength, he always joined in the rough sports of his men, defeating

with ease any four of the strongest amongst them in any feats requiring bodily power.

Therefore as the Corsican knight passed along the iron ranks of the Barbuti not a few of them secretly wished that he might be able to prolong the combat the turning of a glass. As to any injury to their chief they thought that quite impossible.

A wide space was left encircled by the troops; and in the middle of this stood Duke Guarnieri, leaning on his immense battle-axe. Near him was the fair-faced page, holding a half hour-glass.

To say that Giacinto's heart did not beat somewhat quicker when he beheld the majestic figure of his antagonist, cased from head to heel in his impenetrable proof mail, would be scarcely possible. Still he was perfectly self-possessed. The visor of the Duke's helmet was up; and his dark and vengeful glance rested upon the features of our hero with a terrible look of hatred and revenge.

A perfect silence reigned amid the thousands looking on.

The Duke, approaching close to his antagonist, and speaking sufficiently loud for every individual around to hear his words, said—

"You are, I understand, a knight honorable of the order of San Stefano; therefore an antagonist worthy of my arm—that your brethren may hereafter hear that you received fair and honourable terms, I now ask, whether you have any demand to make before we begin this duel—I have plighted my word—and I now repeat it, that if you survive after the sand of that glass has run out, you are free to leave my camp. It is just that a father should revenge his son's death. Therefore I challenge you; and that it may not hereafter be said that Guarnieri forced his captive to stand up to be slaughtered, I leave you now the choice to quit my camp unscathed, bearing with you a father's curse, and a coward's name."

Every word the Duke uttered was clear and distinct; and though his eyes flashed with passion, and Paoli could see that the hand that rested on his battle-axe shook with emotion, yet his voice was sonorous and clear as a bell.

As he ceased speaking, a murmur of applause rose from amidst the ranks.

"I have but one request to make, Sir Duke," replied the Corsican; "and that is, that my squire may be permitted—should it be my fate to fall in the combat—to quit your camp unmolested. As to your offer that I may leave it without meeting you in this duel, I utterly reject and scorn it; not from the fear of coward being attached to the name of a Knight of St. Stefano; for, thank God, I have established too good a character amongst my brethren to be tarnished by refusing a contest even with Duke Guarnieri. You have forcibly taken me captive, contrary to all law; and for this act, I

now defy you before your assembled troops. I came not here to comply with your terms and gratify your pride by an empty pageant. I defy you to mortal combat, and let him who first draws blood be the victor to do as he thinks fit with the vanquished."

"Madman!" almost roared the easily excited Duke, "I accept your conditions." Then, with a mocking laugh, he turned to his men. "You hear this fool-hardy and mad knight. For certain reasons, I gave him a chance of life. He despises it, and defies me. And by the power he adores, he dies. Begone, boy!" he exclaimed to the page; and, closing the visor of his casque with an angry gesture, he stepped a pace back aud grasped his battle-axe.

Pulini's heart sank within him. "I knew it," he murmured to himself; "his haughty spirit has revolted against the idea of owing his life to mere artifice. Ah, Saint Antony, the

race of the Paoli's I fear me perishes!—for that incarnate fiend will never spare him even if he should first draw blood."

In the meantime, Paoli carefully closed his visor, and grasped his sword, one of great weight and exquisite temper.

And then commenced a combat between two men much better matched than any one present could surmise. Paoli's chief object was to avoid a direct blow from so terrible a weapon as the Duke fought with. Infinitely more active, and wielding a weapon much less fatiguing, the Corsican for several moments baffled every effort of the Duke to bring down his axe on his casque. Then, indeed, it became very evident to the soldiers assembled that had the combat depended on the turning of a half hour-glass, Paoli could easily have prolonged the time.

The young page had not retired more than a few paces from the combatants, and stood watching the fight with intense anxiety. Baffled and

astounded, Guarnieri began to lose his self-possession. As yet, our hero had struck no blow. The Duke, though perfectly unwearied, was getting furious, for he struck with greater rapidity, forcing Paoli at times to interpose his sword, which he did, however, with great caution.

At length, a blow, partly stopped by the Corsican's sword, alighted sideways upon his casque, tearing away crest and plume, and causing Giacinto to stagger under its force.

A murmur now ran through the ranks; and Pulini involuntarily advanced a step or two. The Duke uttered a savage oath, and pressed on his antagonist fiercely, and somewhat unwarily; for Paoli's blood was roused, and for the first time, he struck the Duke a tremendous blow full upon the side of his casque, causing him to stagger back a pace or two. The Barbuti were amazed; and before Guarnieri, who grasped his axe with both hands, could recover his guard, a second blow severed the

fastenings of his casque, leaving his head unprotected, and inflicting a gash, though slight, on his neck from which the blood spirted over his mail.

When he saw the blood, Giacinto Paoli drew back. But Guarnieri, frantic with rage and disappointed vengeance, and forgetful of his plighted word, had grasped his axe, and was rushing forward, when the young page, receiving a sign from some unseen hand, darted forward exclaiming—

"Your plighted word! your plighted word, my Lord Duke!" And pale as death, he sank upon his knees.

"Ah, accursed meddler, and fool!" roared the Duke. "Do you dare to stay my hand? take your reward."

The next instant the brains of the unfortunate page would have been dashed out, had not the sword of Paoli turned the stroke aside. The weapon was broken in several pieces, but the page was saved.

Quick as thought, the Duke turned like a baited bull; and again raising his axe, with a horrid laugh, shouted—

"Now die! Accursed Italian die!"

But quicker even than his words, was the spring Pulini made to the side of the furious Duke, interposing his master's battle-axe between the descending weapon and the unshrinking Corsican. The blow beat the axe from the squire's hand, knocking him senseless at his master's feet. The temper of his headpiece alone saved his life.

All was now confusion; for a universal shout from the Barbuti of "Your word, Duke! Your plighted word, Duke! Blood has been drawn!" filled the air.

Heedless of all, Paoli kneeled down, and supported the head of his faithful squire who, fortunately, was only stunned; while Guarnieri stood as if changed into a statue, the foam of rage covering his lips, and the un-

checked blood from the gash in his neck running down his cuirass in front.

"Begone from my camp!" at last burst from the livid lips of the infuriated German. "Some sorcery has aided your arm. But begone, while yet I can restrain my rage, for, by Heaven, if you stand before me yet another minute, I will put you to a death of torture."

What our hero might have replied we know not; but many of the Barbuti, with the father of the fair page whose life he had saved—one of the Duke's officers—interposed, and actually forced the Knight and his squire from the spot. The Duke remained standing there, as if in a dream.

"Sir Knight," said the father of the page, leading our hero from the field, "you are a brave and gallant man—you saved my poor boy's life, and your own would have been sacrificed by the act; for once his blood is shed, our leader loses his reason. Yours was

a rash and daring defiance; but you are saved. They are saddling your horses. If you will accept this rough weapon," offering his own iron-hilted blade, "till you get a better, you will gratify me."

Paoli thanked the rough, but grateful German; and, seeing their horses brought forth, and Pulini able to mount, he lost no more time in words; but, thanking Providence internally for his most unlooked-for escape—for, in truth, he scarcely expected it—he threw himself on his horse. As he did so, the fair page of Hermengarde pressed to his side, and, taking his hand, kissed it, saying, in a very low voice—

"Do not take the road to Florence—you will be waylaid by Hugo de Hermstadd, the squire, and most devoted of all Ludovico's personal followers."

"Thanks, gentle boy," returned Paoli, as he kissed his open brow. Then shaking the the hard hand of the German officer, he spur-

red his steed up the ascent from the camp of Guarnieri, and soon came out on a bridle-road, which he was told would lead him into the great Florentine thoroughfare to Livorno, their port, at that period, for the outlet of their rapidly-increasing commerce.

Pulini, though still smarting under the effect of the stunning blow he had received—not from the battle-axe of the furious Guarnieri, for that would have been death—but from the handle of the weapon he had interposed to save his master's life—which, beaten back had struck him down, was overjoyed at finding his master clear of the German's camp, alive and unhurt.

Paoli himself, felt elated, though anxious that his squire should not over-exert himself. Accordingly, instead of pursuing the road to Florence, he took the way to Bosco, a fortified town belonging to the Florentines, distant only a league. There he resolved to remain for a couple of days.

CHAPTER V.

THE BROTHERS.

About fifteen miles to the eastward of Bastia, in Corsica, lies the very singular and picturesque island of Capraja. Though, viewed from a distance, it appears nothing more than a dark speck upon the wide waters that encircle it, and though only about fifteen miles in circumference, it yet has a most spacious and safe harbour; and its single town, containing, at the period of our story, above three thousand five hundred inhabitants, belonged to a

Corsican family of the name of Damari. At the time of the first invasion of Corsica, the race of Damari possessed considerable property in the island; but Corsica being conquered, their fiefs were seized; and the last male branch of the Damari's, Filippo Guiseppe, Marchese Damari, then a very young man—stripped of his Corsican fiefs—fled to Capraja, the last of his feudal tenures. But the limits of this little island being too confined for the taste of the young Marchese, he passed over into Italy, and joined the Crusaders. After spending five years in Palestine, he returned to Italy, married the wealthy heiress of a Siennese noble, and intended to fix his residence on the peninsula. But some years after the great pestilence broke out, and soon spread over the fair fields of the south with an appalling spirit of desolation. Every one fled; amongst the rest, the Crusader and his bride, who sought, in their little, neglected fief of Capraja, a refuge from the plague, which was sweeping from the

earth a third of its inhabitants. The young wife, of a retiring and quiet disposition, was delighted with the romantic beauties of this truly singular isle, and pleased with the society of the few Corsican signori who had retired there with their families, to breathe the air of freedom so dear to them.

The island was totally inaccessible, except in front of the town, which was seated on the land-locked bay that formed its harbour. The Marchese, resolving to defend this last stronghold of Corsica from the Genoese, should they attempt its subjugation, built the fortress protecting the narrow entrance to the harbour, also one or two towers, as look-outs, in elevated situations.

After nineteen years of wedded life, the Crusader became a widower, with two sons, and six years subsequently, he followed his beloved consort. His eldest son, Guiseppe, was at that period five-and twenty; and Bartolomeo, the youngest, eighteen years of age. Never were

two brothers more dissimilar in disposition, and yet both were amiable and much loved by the little community of Capraja. Guiseppe, who succeeded to the title and property of his father, was of a somewhat singular and eccentric disposition: his thoughts or his wishes never roamed beyond the narrow limits of his island: he courted its solitude: he loved every foot of ground within its boundaries: he was proud of his long line of unblemished descent; but his pride never gave offence, for he was kind and liberal to those about him. For the period in which he lived, he was singularly learned, and passed much of his time in a costly library procured from Rome, containing many valuable manuscripts.

Bartolomeo, the younger, was the reverse of his brother. Having a social disposition, and an ardent mind, he panted to see the world; and though he loved his brother dearly, he felt that the little island and its simple inhabitants formed too narrow a circle for his buoyant and

change-loving disposition. He had imbibed some of his brother's taste for reading; but in how different a manner was that taste directed! Bartolomeo perused with avidity the chronicles of Venice, Florence, and Pisa: he read of the wealth and energy of their merchant nobles; of their settlements in the East; their colonies; the stores of wealth gained by honorable traffic; and the vast benefits their people derived from their daring enterprises.

Bartolomeo would sometimes converse with his brother on those subjects; but the latter curled his lip with scorn at the mention of commerce—those "slaves of gold," as he styled the merchants of Venice, Pisa, and Florence. The younger Damari, on the contrary, designated them as men benefitting mankind by their industry and speculation — spreading knowledge and arts amongst their countrymen —creating a bustling, happy, and cheerful population—and, in the end, raising monuments of power and splendour, which the lapse of

ages have not, as yet, had the power to destroy.

The Marchese Damari married the exiled daughter of a noble Corsican, who had sought refuge on the island. The Marchesa was young, handsome, amiable, and Bartolomeo rejoiced in his brother's happiness. But he lost his cheerfulness, and, without a companion, would roam about the island for hours, his eyes being fixed upon the blue hills of distant Italy.

"I cannot," he would exclaim, as his gaze rested on these hills—"I cannot pass a whole life here. It is impossible. Capraja is too still, too tranquil and monotonous. Every day is but the repetition of the past. No change—no bustle of active life. I will tell Guiseppe that I must seek my fortune on a foreign soil."

And Bortolomeo did speak his wishes to Guiseppe. The Marchese looked mournfully in his brother's face for a time before he spoke. And then he said all a kind and affectionate

brother could say to dissuade Bartolomeo from his projects—but in vain.

"A Damari turn to the paltry trade of buying and selling, God knows what," exclaimed the Marchese.

"Nay, Guiseppe," said Bartolomeo, with spirit, "the nobles of Liguria and of Pisa think it no disgrace that their galleys, loaded with the produce of other climes, bring them wealth, and enable them to erect habitations fit for princes. What was Venice, till her commerce and her industry made her all glorious as she is?"

But Guiseppe, like his sire, the Crusader, was an enemy to trade: he was not to be convinced. He made no reply to his brother, but left the room. In a few minutes, however, he returned, and laid upon the table two weighty bags of gold, with a written order for a large sum on a wealthy merchant in Pisa.

"There, my beloved brother," said he,

solemnly but affectionately, "there is twice the portion left you by our good father. Should you require it, Bartolomeo, you can have as much more. Take it, and thy elder brother's blessing. But one thing I must request; namely, that while your foot rests upon the soil of the Continent, the name of Damari must be forgotten. Any other will do," he added, somewhat bitterly, "any other will do to be plundered, deceived, and——" he paused; then added, more kindly, "but not disgraced. Go, brother! And should you become destitute or friendless, remember you have, if he lives, an affectionate brother, and, in Capraja, always a home."

The brothers parted.

The young adventurer landed on the Continent of Italy, proceeded to Pisa, and lodged his money in the famous bank of that city.

It is not our intention, nor is it necessary, to follow the fortunes of the young Caprese at this period of our story. We shall meet him

again when age had tempered and calmed the enthusiasm of his disposition. He had proved that the world was not all smiles, but had a fair proportion of frowns. Still, he had not quarrelled with it; but even after middle age, had yet to learn and to feel its worst trials. We leave him now, and return to Giacinto Paoli, who was proceeding on his journey to Venice about twenty-six years after Bartolomoe Damari's departure from Capraja.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VENETIAN MERCHANT.

To avoid a long and tedious journey, Paoli proceeded to Rimini; and, having disposed of his steeds, hired a small speronella to carry him and his squire to Venice.

The voyage up the Adriatic—that most uncertain of all seas as to storms and calms—was, however, prosperous; and the third day he came within sight of the Sea-girt city—the Adriatic Queen. The wind had been extremely light the whole day; and as the speronella

cautiously threaded her course through the narrow and intricate lagunes, the knight and his squire had full leisure to contemplate a scene truly unequalled for singularity and splendour.

On the walls of the then noble arsenal of Venice, the standard of the lion—

> "Which through fire
> And blood she bore o're subject earth and sea,'*

blew out proudly in the gentle breeze. There stood the city on its hundred isles, with its domes, spires, towers, pillars and palaces—its lake-like sea, covered with innumerable merchant craft of every size and rig then known. As the speronella glided past the arsenal, the busy hum of the workmen, the clank of iron, and the creaking of the vast

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* Byron.

cranes, fell distinctly on the ear. At that period, three thousand workmen were employed in the arsenal. What would be the sensations of a Dandolo or a Faliero could either of those doges rise from his tomb and cast a momentary glance, in these days, upon the scene of their former pride, and triumph. Alas! the name of Venice alone remains, and the memory of the glorious past!

The speronella came to an anchor; and, in less than an hour, Paoli and his squire, with his mails, were landed at an hostelleria called the Dalmatian Arms.

On the following morning, Giacinto desired Pulini to hail a gondola, as it was his intention to visit his father's early and well-beloved friend. Giacinto had passed but a very sleepless night: he had much to reflect on: he was young; and the world was before him; and he possessed sufficient funds to enable him to live—without risking his independence. He did not doubt of a kind reception from the

Venetian merchant, of whose disposition and generosity of heart he had heard much from his father. He had seen him once—just before he quitted the College of Pisa; and he felt perfectly satisfied he should remember the Venetian. Would he remember him? Eight or nine years make but little alteration in the appearance of a man of middle age; but the sudden springing of youth into manhood, is a change indeed.

Placing upon his finger the ring bestowed by the merchant on his father, Giacinto prepared for his visit.

"There is a young gondolier dwelling in this house, Signor, who is ready to attend you," said Pulini, returning. "Our host speaks highly of him; but, in sooth, his honest and intelligent face is as good a character as one would wish—"

"Are you beginning to study the human countenance, Pulini?" asked Paoli with a smile, "though your first reading was a

failure. You remember you said if ever there was a fellow inclined to do a black act, that Barbuti called red Werter was the man. Yet his heart, though cased in a very rough exterior, was a kind one—"

"I was wrong there, Signor, I confess," replied Pulini; "still I don't give up my intended study. I would rather rely on a character taken from a man's face, than from the lips of another."

"Well, well, Pulini, in future wanderings we shall, no doubt, have sufficient opportunity of testing this scheme of judging of our fellow man by his features. But now for this gondolier—"

As Paoli entered the gondolá, he was struck with the open and intelligent countenance of the Venetian—a very young man—

"Where would the Signor please to go?" enquired the youth, as with a vigorous and graceful sweep of his oar, he impelled the boat into the middle of the canal.

"You are acquainted with the name of Tiepolo, no doubt," said the Knight—"I wish to land as near the door of the Merchant's Palace as possible."

"At the very door, Signor, you shall be landed. There is no name better known in Venice, or nobler perhaps than the Marchese Tiepolo," replied the gondolier urging his boat forwards.

"The Signor Tiepolo has been ennobled then?" questioned the Corsican. "When did he receive his dignity?"

"Some time after the great pestilence, ignor, I believe," replied the gondolier. ıt seems the coffers of St Mark were exhaus· ıd; and the noble Merchant freely bestowed part of his wealth to save the people of Venice from starvation. The senate, Signor, bestowed an empty title, (one I believe that formerly belonged to the family) the people of Venice gave a blessing from their hearts—"

The Corsican was struck with the manner

and tone of the gondolier, whose accent was not that of a Venetian. There was something altogether in the youth that interested our hero, and looking him in the face, he said—

"You are not, I judge, a native of Venice."

"No, Signor, no; thanks to St Nicholas, I claim the wild hills of the Tyrol as my birthplace. I fled my country, signor," he added in a low voice, and his eyes flashed, "to avoid *one* tyrant, and here I have stumbled on *ten* —But, Signor, here is the grand canal. The Signor is, I perceive, a stranger to Venice. This is one of the wonders of this wonderful city. Yonder is the bridge of the Rialto."

Giacinto, like every one who has visited Venice, was struck and surprised by the novelty of every object that surrounded him. Countless gondolas shot along the surface of the smooth water. The noble, and, at times, magnificent palaces that lined each side of the

canal—the imposing front of the ducal palace —its noble colonnades—the red columns—the Piazzetto of St Mark, were all objects of wonder and admiration—

Gliding from the grand canal into one much narrower, the gondolier arrested his boat alongside a flight of steps leading to the portico of a spacious mansion.

"This is the Palazzo Tiepolo, Signor. Shall I await your return?"

Paoli manifested a wish to retain the gondolier in his service while in Venice. The youth's dark eyes flashed with pleasure as he expressed his gratitude.

Ascending the steps, Paoli entered beneath the colonnaded front; and on requesting to see the Marchese Tiepolo, one of the domestics summoned the usher. A respectable personage in black then appeared, and having received our hero's name, conducted him through a noble hall, and up a marble staircase of mag-

nificent proportions, with alcoves, or niches, on each landing-place, filled with marble statues, exquisitely sculptured. Thence he passed along a spacious corridor, and was shewn into a saloon, evidently the one used by the family as a withdrawing room.

The major-domo then retired, saying he would inform the Marchese of his wish to see him.

The Corsican cast a casual glance around. The jalousies were down, and the windows open to admit the cool and pleasant breeze; for the day was sultry, and a soft and subdued light fell upon each object in the room.

Many of the luxuries of the East adorned the apartment. The then rare and costly mirrors, the manufacture of Venice, hung in splendid frames from the walls; the tables were covered with various articles of female use and taste; in a corner stood a harp; on

an ottoman lay a lute, music, and embroidery.

Seeing some portraits suspended from the wall, the Knight approached to gain a nearer view. There were four: the first he looked upon, he immediately recognised as the Marchese. Two smaller ones next attracted his attention: they were the portraits of two young and beautiful girls in the Venetian costume. The first glance caused him to give a start of surprise; he imagined he beheld the portrait of the fair and youthful maiden he had rescued from the grasp of Ludovico Guarnieri —a second glance, however, proved to him, that however strong the resemblance, it was not the portrait of Agnes, for the color of the hair, the eyes, the age, all differed. Yet he felt the likeness was striking.

While pondering over this strange resemblance, the door opened, and the Marchese [illegible]polo entered the saloon. Advancing, he

embraced Giacinto with paternal kindness; welcomed him to Venice; and insisted on his instantly taking up his abode in the Palace. Without paying the slightest attention to Giacinto's efforts to speak, he summoned the major domo, and dispatched two of his domestics to bring his young visitor's mails; and, before night, the Corsican and his squire were completely established in a handsome suite of apartments. Before a week had expired, Giacinto felt more at home in the amiable family of the Marchese than a year of intercourse would warrant.

Paoli had a long and interesting conversation with the Marchese, who listened to his brief tale with much emotion. He mourned deeply over the fate of his early friend; and, as he pressed the hand of the young Knight, and his gaze rested upon the ring, the token of past friendship, his eye glistened, and he vowed he would be a second father to the

youth. Giacinto stated his wishes, and his intention of entering into the service of Venice.

"Of that, my young friend," said the Marchese, "we will talk another time. Be in no hurry. You must look about you first, and know something about us. Of this be assured; anything you wish, and that my interest, which is not trifling, with the rulers of Venice, can procure, shall be yours. I owe your lamented father a life. Let me prove my gratitude to the son. As God has not blessed *me* with a son, you must be one to me, though I am proud of the two sweet girls Heaven has bestowed upon me."

Having established our hero and his squire in the palazzo of the Marchese, we will briefly describe the Venetian merchant and his family, with whom the Corsican was already a prodigious favorite.

The Marchese Tiepolo was at this period in his fifty-fourth year—and still a fine and

stately-looking figure, with handsome features, clearly defining, by their mild and benevolent expression, the nobleness of his character. Notwithstanding the immense sacrifices he had made to the State in order to relieve his countrymen, after their dreadful sufferings during the great pestilence, and the famine that followed—at the period of Giacinto Paoli's visit to Venice, Tiepolo was accounted one of the richest merchants in that city of wealth.

The Marchesa was of the noble house of Pisani, and eight or ten years younger than her lord. She was still a woman of fascinating manners, and, though not remarkable for beauty, her countenance was extremely pleasing.

Her daughters were accounted two of the fairest amid the maidens of Venice.

The eldest, Julia, was betrothed to a Venetian noble of large fortune, and one of the Council of Forty, Count Michello Steno, well

known in Venetian history, as the writer of a pasquinade, that cost the Doge Falieri his life.

The youngest, Paulina, then in her eighteenth year, it was her portrait that had so forcibly reminded the Corsican of the young Agnes. The Lady Paulina, at the time of Paoli's visit, was the pride and reigning toast of Venice.

The sisters were perhaps equally beautiful, though their style of beauty differed. Julia was rather below the middle height, of a slight but graceful figure: her manner, though cheerful, and, at times, animated, was in general somewhat silent and reserved. Paulina's figure was above the ordinary height of her sex. She was full of life and vivacity; the very thoughts of her heart were to be read in her speaking and beautiful eyes. In person, she was graceful and easy, though much fuller proportioned than her sister; and in disposi-

tion, feeling, and generosity, she resembled her father.

Paulina had as many lovers as there were caveleros in Venice; but the maiden's heart was so light, her spirits too vivacious to allow that unruly and impatient urchin Cupid to make any impression on them.

Such was the family of the Marchese Tiepolo.

Week passed after week, till several months had run rapidly over, and, as yet, the Corsican had made no effort to enter the service of Venice, though a powerful fleet was then preparing in the Arsenal, for an expedition to the East. It was not that a life of idleness and pleasure accorded with the taste or inclination of the exile: far from it; he loved, in his heart, the excitement of arms, and ardently longed for active employment. But the Marchese, day after day, when he alluded to the subject, put him off, saying—

"You must not be in a hurry, or I shall say

you are tired of us. Only wait till this galley I am building is finished, and I will talk to you on the subject."

One evening, Giacinto had accompanied the Marchese to a beautiful villa he was completing on the little island of Gino, in the Lagunes. They sat enjoying the delicious breeze that swept over the still waters —beneath the verandah—gazing on the glories of a magnificent sunset. Venice lay directly opposite. Even the hum of its busy and enormous population, came faintly across the sleeping waters. Innumerable gondolas, and several stately galleys reposed listlessly upon the Lagune. Gay parties were amusing themselves in gaudily decorated barges; for the sweet voices of Venetian maidens, combined with guitar and lute, came melodiously to the ear.

"Well, my dear young friend," said the Marchese, laying his hand on the shoulder of the abstracted Corsican, "What think you

now of Venice and its pleasures? Does it realize the dreams and anticipations of boyhood? Do you remember the hundred questions you asked me in Pisa, concerning the Adriatic Queen?"

"It does—and it does not, my kind friend," returned the Knight, rousing himself from a dreamy thought, in which the vision of the unknown Agnes was strongely mingled with Paulina Tiepolo; "probably in youth we look upon every thing with a magnifying glass. As we advance in life, the charm of many things is lessened as the imagination gets sobered. But, in truth, Marchese, I have nought to say against Venice or its pleasures. Still—"

"I see how it is, Giacinto," interrupted the Marchese, with a smile, "you are not exactly the kind of man to wile away youth and manhood in pursuit of pleasure. That herculean frame of thine was formed for nobler purposes. The life you now lead is a striking contrast to the stirring scenes of past years, and you feel

it even more perhaps than you are aware of—your wish is to serve under our banner in this war with your old enemies the Genoese. This is easily accomplished; still I do not think you would like to be bound in your time of service. The fleet now fitting out to cruise against the galleys of Genoa will be one of the finest that ever sailed the waters of the Adriatic. The Genoese galleys are now blockading the mouth of the Don: They have captured every Venetian vessel that has attempted to enter. Two of my galleys, with rich cargoes, bound for Byzantium, and consigned to my partner, a very wealthy Venetian merchant, of the name of Alviano, were captured and condemned. It is the custom of merchants and even nobles of Venice and Genoa, to build and equip war galleys which are manned sometimes by volunteers, and often commanded by the younger sons of our nobility. These galleys have a protection from the state. When in company, they obey the orders of the Venetian

admiral. A certain portion of all prizes taken goes into the coffers of St. Mark. In the present fleet there are six galleys fitting out by our young nobility, the most conspicuous of whom, is the gallant Count Otho Palavicino. Young Pisani, with whom you have become so intimate, also commands a very fine and stately galley; his father is appointed admiral of the entire fleet. Now I ardently wish you, if it suits your views, to take the command of the fine galley I am now ready to launch. You have often said she is a noble model: she shall be second to none in equipment. With a fine crew, two of my best pilots, and volunteers, you will have more than you require; and for the prizes you take, we share equally," added the Marchese.

Not allowing Paoli to put in a word—struck as he was by the noble and generous proposal of the Venetian, the Marchese continued to explain his offer.

"Admiral Pisani," said he, "to whom I

have already mentioned the subject, engages to procure you a protection from the Senate, rarely granted to a foreigner. Now, my dear boy, I know this will suit your views, for you mentioned the other day to Count Steno and young Pisani—your wish to serve on board a vessel in this fleet—besides," added he, with a pleased smile, and pressing the hand of the youth, "I am at the same time serving myself."

Giacinto smiled.

"A fact, I assure you," continued the Marchese. "I intend to share in the prizes you take which you will consign to the Signor Alviano in Byzantium. He will know what to do with them. You see this will be a joint concern between us—so all is settled. We will say no more of this now. The fleet sails after the festivities to be given on the occasion of this strange marriage of our aged Doge, Marino Faliero. His young and beautiful bride is scarcely eighteen, and he is eighty."

"A fearful disparity of years," observed

Paoli, as he and the Marchese entered the gondola.

"A union that will lead to sorrow," returned the Marchese, in a low tone. "Marino Faliero is a good and a great man, and was a stout-hearted soldier. He served Venice in his youth with his best blood. Still our Doge is hot of temper, somewhat imperious, and jealous to excess.

"Bad qualities," remarked the Knight, "to ensure happiness with a young and beautiful bride."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SISTERS AND COUSIN.

Amongst the many nobles and cavaleros who frequented the Palazzo Tiepolo, Giacinto early distinguished, and formed a close intimacy with Count Steno, the betrothed of Julia, and Orsini Pisani, both young men, of generous and upright principles, though very different in manner and character; Count Steno was much attached to his intended, notwithstanding their wide dissimilarity of character. The Count had an unceasing fund of gaiety in his dispo-

sition, with a quick, but forgiving temper. He was accounted the wittiest noble in Venice; indeed, in his love of satire, he, at times, indulged too freely.

The Count became greatly attached to the Corsican, who was a general favorite with the frequenters of the Tiepolo Palace. Steno was a keen observer of those around him; he felt a real and brotherly affection for the beautiful Paulina, and had observed that the maiden—perhaps scarcely conscious of it—looked with evident partiality upon Paoli.

Steno rejoiced at this, for he felt satisfied that the Marchese, judging from some expressions that fell from his lips, would regard an attachment between the exile and his daughter as a desirable object. He admired and loved the young knight as a father: he had closely studied his disposition; and a constant intercourse of several months, satisfied him that his daughter's happiness would be secured by a

union with the Corsican, provided they should become mutually attached.

A few days before the festivities were to take place at the Ducal Palace, the Corsican, whose whole heart was engaged in the fitting up of his galley for the expedition, returned early from the Arsenal. The day was an unusually wet one: he was going, notwithstanding, to Chiozzi to make some inquiries for the Marchese, when, in passing the saloon, on his way to his chamber, he heard the sweet tones of the Lady Paulina's voice, accompanied by the harp. Passionately fond of music, he forgot his object in seeking his chamber, and entered the saloon. Both sisters were in the apartment—Julia embroidering, Paulina playing and singing.

"This is quite an unusual visit, Signor Paoli," said the Lady Paulina, pausing, and looking into the face of the Corsican, with a bright smile. "Has the Lion" (the name of

the galley) "been outrageous and driven you away? for I know even this day of torrents, bad as it is, would not have that effect."

"Fair Paulina," returned the Knight, seating himself beside the maiden, "the charm of your voice arrested my steps. I was going to Chiozzi."

"Going to Choizzi such a day as this?" laughed the maiden. "It was well for your gondoliers that my voice had the power of detaining you. *They* will thank me at all events; for I suppose you will wisely remain where you are."

"Undoubtedly, if you will continue the ballad you were singing when I came in. I can go to Chiozzi any day; but your sweet voice is too—"

"Now, Signor Paoli, I wont hear any flattery from you. I will take all you were going to say for truth," interrupted the maiden, playfully.

"Since when, Paulina, have you taken a

dislike to flattery—always acceptable to our sex?" interrogated Julia, looking up from her work.

"Nay, Julia," responded Paulina, "not to *all* our sex. You, for one, cannot bear it, and would, I verily believe, send Steno into exile were he only to hint at paying you a compliment."

"I wish Michaello would flatter more, and use his wit less," returned Julia, thoughtfully. "But let the Signor Paoli have the ballad. I wish for the rest of it myself, having never heard you sing it before."

"I don't think in conscience I ought to go on," said Paulina, running her fingers over the harp. "I do verily believe it was the rain that drove you in here, Signor Paoli, for shelter. I cannot think what you men can be doing day after day on board that galley."

"Sing me the song first, Paulina, and you shall know all about it," returned the Corsi-

"Well, well, you men must be obeyed; so, in revenge, I will inflict upon you the whole thirteen verses of this most doleful ballad.

Paulina's was a voice that touched the heart; and the ballad was a sweet, plaintive melody.

The Corsican listened with rapt attention, gazing on the speaking features of the singer. The singular likeness of Paulina to the unknown Agnes more forcibly than ever struck him.

"It certainly is a very singular likeness," unconsciously uttered the knight, as Paulina ceased.

But recollecting himself, he paid the lovely Venetian the compliments she so well merited for the song.

"Now that you have done complimenting me, Signor Paoli," said the maiden, inquiringly, and looking in his face, "what did you mean by saying—though I don't think you intended it for mortal ears—'It is certainly a

most singular likeness?' You were looking at me at the time—so I must know who it is I am like. Some fair Corsican maiden, of course."

"In truth, beautiful Paulina, I likened you to no Corsican damsel. We cannot boast of one so fair within the limits of our little isle."

"Taking that for granted, Sir Knight," returned the maiden, a little impatiently, "who do I resemble? any one in Venice?"

"In sooth, Paulina," returned Giacinto, with a smile, "I know not where the damsel may be at this moment. The only name I heard her addressed by, was Agnes—she was very beautiful, very young, and very interesting."

"Agnes!" repeated the Lady Julia, laying down her work; "we have a very fair cousin of that name. But there are many so called."

"Where did you meet that distressed

damsel?" enquired Paulina; "for, of course, you delivered her from some imminent peril like a true wandering knight; for, somehow, you adventurous cavaleros are always lucky in finding peerless maidens to rescue."

"You are not far wrong, fair lady," replied Paoli, laughing; "for, in truth, the maiden was in danger, and I had the good fortune to save her from it, for which service I received a very bright smile from the damsel, and the thanks of a stout-hearted old cavalero—whose name, if I remember right, was Tolosino."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed both sisters at once, looking astonished in the face of the equally surprised Corsican. "It was our cousin, Agnes Alviano, after all. How strange! But let us hear the whole adventure, from beginning to end," anxiously demanded Paulina, with a slight variation of colour.

This request Giacinto obeyed, being equally

anxious to hear more of his hitherto fair unknown—

The Corsican's account was a very modest one. This, Paulina guessed, and resolved to get a fuller narrative from Pulini, who was a most especial favorite in the Marchese's family—

Giacinto did not even touch upon his interview or combat with Duke Guarnieri, merely saying he had rescued the young lady from falling into the hands of some German Condottieri.

"And now may I ask you," questioned the Knight, "where this fair cousin of yours is residing, and who is the Cavalero Tolosino and his good Dame?"

Paulina did not reply: she was somewhat abstracted. But the Lady Julia said. "You have fairly, Sir Knight, earned our gratitude. Our family are destined to be indebted to yours. Agnes is, in sooth, more our sister

in affection than cousin—we three were reared together."

"And a sweeter being in temper and des position, never existed," rejoined the generous Paulina, looking up. From that moment, she formed an internal resolution, that saved her from much unhappiness.

"Agnes," continued the Lady Julia, "is the only daughter of the Signor Alviano, a wealthy Merchant who married our mother's sister, and who has been settled in the city of Byzantium nearly eighteen years. My aunt unfortunately died when Agnes was only two years old; and the little girl was sent with its nurse to be reared and educated in Venice under our mother's eye. She was brought up with us, and is about two years younger than Paulina. Her father wishing her return when not quite sixteen, she left us to our deep regret under the care of the Signor Tolosino, a stout old Cavalero, and a distant

relation of our family, who resides in a fine old castle near Livorno. My father thought it safer that Agnes should embark for Byzantium in a Florentine galley—as we are at war with Genoa, and the Adriatic was at that time covered with Genoese galleys. She is, by this time, I trust safe and happy in her father's arms. How strange, Signor Paoli, that you should be her deliverer from such peril!"

"Positively, Signor Paoli," observed Paulina with a quiet smile, "you ought, from the very romance of your adventure, to be in love with my beautiful and fascinating cousin, for fascinating she is; and, although so very young, I assure you she turned the brains of half our Venetian Cavaleros."

As the maiden paused, Paoli looked inquiringly in her expressive face, and said. "But what ought I to do fair Paulina? you did not finish your sentence."

The maiden blushed slightly, replying, "oh

you know very well what you ought to do. You a Knight, a sworn protector of our sex! Why you ought by this time to have ridden half Italy over in search of your ladye love."

The Corsican smiled—saying—"But love is not always the growth of an hour. If beauty had such potent influence, what should, or would, our sex do?"

"Do!" somewhat sadly echoed the maiden, "why you would love and adore each pretty face you saw, till a fairer came in the way, and then the first would be forgotten."

"Nay Paulina," interrrupted Julia, "you are severe. You must not judge all, for the peccadilloes of a few."

"By-the-by, Signor Paoli," interposed Paulina, wishing to change the subject, "I wanted to ask you a question. You are a Knight of San Stefano. Are the rules of the order the same as those of Rhodes?"

"Nearly the same; but I am only a lay

Knight of St Stephen—not a brother of the order. I am neither bound by vow nor subject to rules or regulations."

Paoli had scarcely ceased speaking when Count Steno entered the room. A pleased smile passed over the Venetian's features when he beheld Paoli seated beside the fair Paulina. After saluting his betrothed, and whispering some lover's hope in her ear, he turned to the Corsican, saying, in a bantering tone.

So here you are, enjoying the smiles of beauty, while I been have toiling all day, *pro bono publico.* I thought you were gone to Chiozzi; but, *cospetto!* I see you are a wiser and a better employed man."

"The Signor Paoli," said Paulina thoughtfully, "would, I fervently believe, rather here the clangor of steel against steel, than the clatter of female tongues. He would prefer a battle field to crowded saloons."

"Do not imagine any such thing, Paulina," said Count Steno laughing. "I consider him

a very ardent admirer of your most adorable sex, and very likely to fall most desperately in love. When he *does* get into that scrape, and if I am not mistaken," added the Venetian whispering in the maiden's ear, "he is in a fair way— eh, Paulina, how beats your own little heart?"

"Quite as regular as yours, Michaello," returned the maiden in a low voice, and at the same time rising. "And take my advice," she added, "do not meddle with other hearts than your own."

Some few days after this period of our story Count Steno entered the chamber of Paoli before his morning toilet was completed.

"What on earth, Michaello," questioned the Corsican, "has made you thus early from your mansion? You look serious. Has anything unusual happened to you?"

"In truth, Giacinto, I must make you my confidant in a very silly transaction—to say the least of it. I wish to keep the affair from

reaching Julia's ears. You know she is of a serious turn of mind and always warning me that my ill-starred taste for satire will, if indulged, bring me into a scrape."

"And the noble maiden is right, Michaello," returned Paoli apprehensively.

"Why I confess," returned Steno, "what I have done would be better had it never been done, trifling as it is. I am now rather angry with myself for letting my temper get the better of my reason. Besides the Doge's age—"

"Why surely, Steno," interrupted the Corsican with a start of surprise, "you have not been mad enough to exercise your wit upon the person of your ruler?"

"*Per Bacco!*" returned the Count somewhat scornfully, "even so, *amico mio*. However, listen, my friend, to the whole affair as it occurred, and then judge me guilty, or not guilty. But one thing is certain: I must try and keep the tale from reaching Julia's ears,

and in doing that, I count upon your assistance.

"You must know, then, Paoli, that the night before last I was invited to a small and select supper-party at the Ducal Palace. It was, in sooth, a very pleasant meeting, and for two or three hours the Doge was in the very best humour. Witty and agreeable he can be; but there is no trusting his temper.

"You have met at several of our *fêtes* the lively and satirical Bianca Spolino, and you have often assisted her in her mad-cap sallies, as you called them. In fact, Bianco is the prettiest mad-cap in Venice; but wherever she is, mischief is sure to come from her laughing eyes.

"The night wore on, and, after supper, I was standing chatting with Bianca, when the young Duchessa, passing by, whispered something in Bianca's ear, which caused the maiden to laugh. In fact, she laughed so loud that the Duchessa held up her finger playfully, and,

turning to me, was on the point of saying something, when the Doge suddenly walked in between us as if to separate us. His face, to my extreme surprise, was purple with rage. He turned full upon me, looking me fiercely, and almost savagely, in the face, and saying at the same time in a low, but very distinct, voice—'Count Steno, I insist on your quitting the palace this instant. Beware, Signor. I have watched you. Age has not made me blind to my own dishonour. Begone, sir. I will have no reply.'

"My blood flew to my temples at this most uncalled-for insult. I would have replied; but I saw that Bianca was deadly pale, and the Duchessa was leaning on her arm, seemingly greatly shocked. Curbing my indignation, I returned the frown of the proud, imperious and jealous old man; and, turning on my heel, I left the saloon. As I passed through the council-chamber—I know not what devil put it in my head—but taking out

my pencil I wrote upon the ducal throne a Pasquinade,* and left the Palace, Now I could almost chop the hand off that did it—I meant only to satirise the Doge; yet the words are capable of a double meaning, and might throw a slur upon the innocent Duchessa."

"I am sorry, very sorry, to hear that," interrupted the Corsican, thoughtfully. "You surely——"

"Nay, Giacinto, you wrong me," interrupted Steno, "I will peril life at any moment with any one, who says, or imagines, I meant purposely to wound the feelings of Faliero's bride. No, no. There's the curse of satirical scribbling. From this hour, I forswear it.

"But to conclude the farce, for such it is now likely to be. The Doge read the lines

* Historical.

and was furious and vowed vengeance against the writer. He suspected me. I was summoned, and did not think of denying it. No apology could soften the rancor of his heart towards me. The affair was laid before the Council of Forty, of which I am a member. The Doge wished the council to look upon the affair as he did, and to consider it a deadly and offensive act—and a State crime. This was folly. I knew, before the Doge could, the sentence that would be pronounced upon me, namely, confinement to my own palace for a few days.

"Now, this affair is known only to the few; for everything that passes within the precincts of St. Mark remains a profound secret. Julia is not very likely to hear of it; but my confining myself to my palace for eight or ten days, will look odd. So suppose you take a trip with me to my paternal castle at Garda. You can say so at breakfast. Julia knows I intend going there in a day or so to see about

some improvements, as I intend passing the first month of our marriage there."

"But is that undergoing your sentence, Steno?" inquired Giacinto, somewhat surprised.

"*Tut, amico mio!*" returned the Count, with a laugh. "The sentence was a mere matter of form to please the jealous old man. I must not be seen in Venice, and nothing more is required. So now do you go down to breakfast, and join me at Fusina. I will have horses there ready for us. Adieu! Of course, you need not say you saw me this morning; unless you are asked, which is not likely, as I am not in general given to early rising."

During breakfast, Giacinto casually observed that he was going to accompany Count Steno to Garda.

Julia looked up, fixing her eyes on our hero with a very meaning glance.

"Why what a changeable being Michaello

is!" exclaimed the Marchesa, laughing. "He promised a week ago to take us this very day to Gino. It is to be hoped, Julia," added the fond mother, patting her daughter's cheek, "that by and by you will keep this volatile Count in better order."

"I want you, Giacinto," said the Marchese, rising "to accompany me for half an hour to the Arsenal. Juliano will attend you afterwards to Fusina. Pisani's new galley—the Colossus, will be launched this morning, she is of the same build and capabilities as the Lion, with a very trifling improvement of my own, in the fashion of her bow. Don't hurry," added the Marchese, leaving the room, "I have an order to write."

Paulina, as she followed her father, said to Paoli, who appeared very intent upon a cup of chocolate—

"So you are going to Garda. Do just tell Michaello that if I were Julia, he should not

get off so lightly. He should pay a penalty for his broken promises which he would little like."

"What penalty should that be, fair maiden?" asked the Corsican, smiling, "I should like to know, as a warning to avoid striking on the same rock."

"There is no fear of you, Sir Knight," replied, Paulina, thoughtfully, and with a slight change of colour. "Your barque is too well freighted with liberty and glory to afford room for love's peccadilloes. Adieu! I wish you a pleasant trip."

Paoli was now alone with the Lady Julia. He, too, was rising, when the soft, low voice of the maiden arrested his steps.

"I intreat you will excuse my delaying you, Signor Paoli," began the Lady Julia. There was some slight hesitation in her manner, as she added—"I thought I heard the tones of

Count Steno's voice in the corridor this morning, speaking to your attendant, Pulini. Was such the case, Signor Paoli ?"

"Michaello was with me early this morning," returned the Knight, "to arrange this excursion to Garda."

"Very singular he did not stay to breakfast," remarked the maiden, her mild and expressive eyes resting upon his, with a somewhat searching expression. "Was there any particular reason that he should be so long at Fusina before you ?"

"Very probably, Signora, public business requires his presence till the very minute of departure."

"Ah, Signor Paoli, Signor Paoli," returned the Lady Julia, with a very pensive smile, "is the air of Venice affecting you already with its mysterious properties ?"

Giacinto looked a little conscious: he was, by nature, a bad deceiver: his features, like

his heart and mind, were open and easily read.

"I wish you, Signor Paoli," pursued Julia, "to tell Michaello—he will mind you, for he esteems you much—that even the walls of St. Mark cannot, at all times, keep the secrets of its inmates, or confine a lady's tongue—or frighten it into silence. I am a party in Steno's secret. Tell him that I hope the events of the night before last will be a lesson to him, and cause him to forbear a dangerous desire of exercising a talent that, in nine cases out of ten, may cause much mischief, and can seldom, if ever, tend to good. I am not offended with Michaello, for he has a noble, honorable heart—he is a little thoughtless and giddy, and gets sometimes into scrapes. This last is truly serious, for it might, in Venice, cost a life, even to a member of the Council of Forty. And now adieu, Signor. But do not think I deal in mysteries. I gained my know-

ledge from the Duchessa's lady in waiting, Bianca Spolino, who informed me of the rude, if not insulting treatment Steno received from the Doge. Still, I cannot excuse the thoughtless slur thrown on the innocent Duchessa."

Giacinto eagerly explained to Julia how deeply Steno felt for having done so.

"But how has Steno avoided the anger of the Doge?" inquired the maiden anxiously. "Bianca did not tell me *that*."

"He was sentenced, by the Council of Forty, to a few days' confinement in his own Palace."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Julia, "and he is now going to exasperate the Doge—for hear of it he will—by despising the sentence passed upon him!"

"Signor Paoli," exclaimed the voice of the Marchese, from without, "I am now ready."

"One word more," said Julia, anxiously. "Tell Steno—and add *your* entreaties to *mine*

—tell him—it will make me happy if he would submit literally to the sentence. You promise me?"

"Most willingly, Signora; for your opinion coincides with mine."

The Corsican joined the Marchese—passed an hour in the Arsenal, and then crossed the lagune to Fusina.

Steno readily listened to Paoli's reasoning, added to Julia's wish; and like a very obedient lover, returned to Venice, and shut himself up in his Palace. But there being no hindrance to his enjoying himself therein, he took especial care to assemble his friends around his hospitable board, with whose assistance, and the composition of a volume of love-sonnets—dedicated to the Lady Julia, he got through the week tolerably to his satisfaction. The time being expired, he hastened to throw himself at the feet of his mistress, determined to think no more of the affair, and believing

it was equally banished from the Doge's mind.

But Count Steno was unfortunately mistaken. Trivial as was the case, it brought much sorrow and persecution on many.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VENETIAN BRAVO.

"YOUR old enemies, Giacinto," remarked the Marchese, one morning, at breakfast, "are determined to have more than one iron in the fire—to use an old saying."

"How so, Marchese?" questioned the Corsican, anxiously. "I should not be sorry to hear that Genoa has got an iron too much in the fire, and that she even burned her fingers."

"It is not unlikely but she may in the

end," returned the Marchese. "The Genoese have instigated Louis of Hungary to declare war against our republic. He has demanded the province of Dalmatia as his right."

"And of course Venice has refused his claim?" said our hero.

"That I cannot take upon me to say, Giacinto. Louis is a prince of active courage and superior talents; and though somewhat inconstant of purpose, is of a noble and generous temper. I fear a war with Louis would not benefit Venice. Nevertheless, our rulers are prepared; and you will be surprised to hear they have resolved to take into pay your quondam antagonist, the famous Duke Guarnieri, who is encamped with five thousand men on the borders of the Trevesan Marsh—having routed the forces of the Lord of Padua, who attempted to arrest his march."

"He is a dangerous neighbour, in peace or at war," said our hero. "I should think Louis of Hungary will, if they come to blows, find

him a formidable antagonist. Did you hear how Sir John Hawkwood has disposed of himself and his gallant band? He has been watching the movements of the Barbuti for some time."

"Report says," rplied the Marchese, "that Guarnieri had designs against Florence; but that Sir John Hawkwood, breaking up his encampment, entered that city by the express desire of the Florentines; and Guarnieri, if he had any project against the republic, abandoned it, broke up his camp, and suddenly marched into the Paduan territory. If he enters into the service of Venice, it will lighten the coffers of St. Mark to pay him and his band. Still, it would never do to let him become a confederate of Louis of Hungary. You may depend on it, he knew what he was about when he encamped on the borders of the Trevesan marsh. By-the-bye, you are going with the girls to Gino; so I must take the command of the Lion to-day. That pilot from Chiozzi

has not returned yet. I hope he may before you sail. He's a valuable fellow."

That same evening, Giacinto, somewhat heated after his excursion to Gino—the day having been uncommonly sultry—entered a gondola, in order to enjoy the cool air that played along the surface of the grand canal. Pulini, as usual, accompanied him. The Knight loved to talk of the past, and of those that were gone.

The moon was at full, and threw a flood of silvery light over the proud buildings of Venice, on one side contrasting strongly with the deep shadows of those on the opposite side of the canal. Numbers of sombre-looking gondolas, freighted with the gay and light-hearted, swept by. Instrumental music, singing, and joyous laughter, came from beneath the dark awnings of the boats.

It was *Tempo di Carnivale.* As Giacinto glided along, he could see within the chambers of the palaces on each side. brilliantly lighted,

and thronged with crowds of gay maskers, even the long balconies were crowded, and the laugh, and the jest, and the soft, silvery tones of the Venetian dames, fell clear and distinct upon the ear.

"Land me at St. Mark's Stairs. I will have an hour's stroll amid yon motley groups," said the knight to his gondolier.

The piazzas of St. Mark were, in truth, thronged to excess. Nobles and contadini, harlequins and mountebanks, under the privilege of the ample mantle and mask, were in happy forgetfulness of everything save the enjoyment of the hour.

To Paoli the mask answered no purpose: he relished neither the custom nor the inconvenience; and for half an hour he rambled amid the noisy crowd, highly amused; till at length, getting tired of the din and confusion of tongues, he rambled into a deserted piazza, and leaning against a pillar, kept his eyes fixed

upon the crowd in the distance. But his thoughts rambled elsewhere: though within sight, and almost within sound of the gay maskers, the spot where he stood seemed as silent and deserted as if miles from the scene of gaiety.

Not very far from where the Corsican was standing, wrapt in thought, and nearly concealed in the deep shadow of the arcade, appeared, also reclining against a column, a very remarkable figure. His heighth equalled that of the Corsican; his arms were folded across a broad chest; his figure, judged through the folds of a brown mantle, was muscular; his head was covered with the heavy-slouched Venetian beaver, which threw a deep shade over his features; the position of the head bent down upon the chest as if in repose, completely concealed the face, which was unmasked.

So profound seemed the repose, or listlessness, of this stranger, that he did not observe

the approach of a male figure, enveloped in a pale blue mantle, his features being concealed by a silk mask.

This person stepped up close to the motionless figure leaning against the pillar; and, laying his hand on his shoulder, said, in a low but distinct voice—

"Asleep, Paulo Verbano! Are the purlieus of St. Mark so desirable a resting place, or so very secure, as to tempt you to repose?"

"And why not, pray?" demanded the stranger, raising his head, but remaining in the same listless attitude. "The place is quite secure enough for me when it pleases me to seek repose. Who are you? And what brings you to seek Paulo Verbano?"

"You seem testy, good Signor Verbano," returned the Blue Mantle, in a sneering tone. "You might guess I required a trifle at your hands, and not be as testy as if you had got a young wife to tease you."

"Has not Paulo Verbano a right to a young bride as well as our noble Doge? At all events," he muttered, in a lower tone, "his Highness will never have what I have had"

"And what's that, Paulo?" returned Blue Mantle.

"Five hungry children to feed," replied the bravo, with a fierce laugh; "but I ask you again what have I to do for you? I don't know even the tone of your voice."

"My purse is heavy," replied Blue Mantle. "Consequently, it is no matter whether you know, or do *not* know, the tone of my voice. I was recommended to Paulo Verbano, as the only bravo in Venice who had a conscience."

"Conscience! humph! You want a cheap job, I suppose," muttered the bravo.

The Blue Mantle laughed, saying—

"Do you know the Marchese Tiepolo?"

At that name the bravo started from his

careless posture, and laid his large, bony hand forcibly on the other's shoulder.

"Do I know the only noble in Venice that has a heart? Who are you? you dare not come to Paulo Verbano, if you valued your life, with a proposal to harm a hair of Tiepolo's head. Speak, man, speak!"

"Take your grip from my arm, man," exclaimed Blue Mantle, roughly, and with a violent jerk; for though short, he was strongly-built.

Having freed himself, he added, in a quieter tone—

"Why, what a fiend's humour you are in to-night! You mistake my words. I want not to harm your worthy friend, the Marchese Tiepolo."

"Well then, *amico*," returned the bravo, "to the point at once. What am I to do? And what is to be my reward?"

"Take that as earnest," replied the stranger, tossing a purse into the hands of the bravo.

"Another, better filled, when the job is done."

"Humph!" muttered Verbano, chinking the gold in the purse. "That's coming to the point. "Who's the man?"

"I asked you a moment ago, if you knew the Marchese Tiepolo. In his Palace, dwells the individual I wish removed. He is not a native of Venice. I do not—"

"*Basta, Basta!*" interrupted the bravo, breaking into a low, chuckling laugh, that startled the stranger. "Oh, by the Mass, it's droll."

"Why, what's in the wind now, Paulo? It may be droll to you, who pocket the gold; but, by St. Antony, your victim will see nothing droll in being tickled by the point of your stiletto. Do you know the man I mean? a tall—"

Laying his heavy hand upon the shoulder of him in the blue mantle, the bravo turned him round, and pointing with his finger in the

direction of our hero, who stood out boldly and fully revealed in the strong moonlight, he said—"Is yonder stranger like your man?"

The unknown started back a pace or two, exclaiming, in a fierce, though low, voice—

"'Tis he, by St. Antony! I will strike him now. No better time or place."

But Paulo's hand checked the stranger's movement, and he said—

"Put up your dagger, man; and use your eye-sight better. Why, it's only yesterday that I received two purses to remove that same individual—*Corpo di Bacco!* If he stays here much longer, he will win the hearts of half the women in Venice, and the hatred of all the men. He'll make my fortune."

"I do not understand you, Paulo," returned the stranger, sulkily. "You say you are paid to stab that individual yonder; and yet there he stands within fifty yards of you—his back to a pillar, and his eyes and his thoughts on

the moon. Where could you strike a better blow, and with greater security?"

"Humph! so you think. Look again. Do you see, not five paces to the right of our victim, a stout, broad-backed man, in the garb of a squire, leaning on the hilt of an iron basket-hilted sword, with his eyes steadily fixed upon the figure of his master? Do you think you could cross that long stream of light that intervenes between us, without attracting that man's observation? Why, that fellow follows his master like a shadow. He has had some warning of the good intentions of our Venetian cavaleros. Or do you think it nothing to strike a man built after the fashion of that Corsican, (for such he is,) and stand, besides, a tussel with his squire, who could afford to lose a head, and yet stand some inches taller than such as you? Be satisfied that I shall choose my time and place, and that the job shall be done to your satisfaction. So *adio*, Signor

Blue Mantle. I have a trifling affair in hand. Remember the other purse, I pray you, when the job is done."

And the bravo laughed his chuckling laugh, and plunging into the deep shades of the piazzi, suddenly disappeared."

At that moment, the Corsican moved from his resting place, totally unconscious of the very interesting conversation carried on within so short a distance from him.

The stranger in the blue mantle looked after the Corsican's receding figure for a moment; and, muttering to himself—

"Curse that bravo! I do believe the villain is afraid to strike the blow. Better trust to my own dagger, which never yet failed me."

And gathering his mantle about him, he rapidly left the spot.

Scarcely had he retired when the head of a boy was protruded from behind a pillar close by, watching the figure in the blue mantle till

it disappeared. The owner of the head then stepped forth, and looked carefully along and without the piazza. He was a youth of about fifteen years of age, vested in the garments of a page. He held a mask in one hand, and a short, dark mantle in the other. Finding the coast clear, he threw the mantle over his shoulders, tied on the mask, and then, with a light, active step, he also hurried on through the piazza of St. Mark.

In a few minutes he became mingled in the noisy and bustling crowd.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MASKED BALL.

TIME passed, and the long expected night of the masked ball at the Ducal Palace at length arrived. The fleet was expected to be in readiness to sail for Byzantium a few days after. The good people of Venice had, therefore, three topics of conversation, namely—the ball, the expedition to the Levant, and the expected war with the King of Hungary.

Two of those topics in no way interested our

hero. He cared very little, if at all, about the war with Louis, and not much more about the festivities of St. Mark. Three months previously he had had an opportunity of sending letters to his old friend and cousin, Otho Sampiero, in Rome, relating, in a brief manner, his adventures, his present situation, and his intention of proceeding to the Levant—having a noble galley under his command—and inviting Otho, and any other young Corsican noble, inclined, to join him in the expedition against Genoa. To this letter he had received no reply, and he felt uneasy about the fate of a cousin to whom he was strongly attached. In those days of no posts, intelligence from places far apart was only to be obtained by private messengers, or couriers. Travelling was exceedingly dangerous and difficult, whether by sea or land. The Mediterranean and the Adriatic swarmed with pirates and corsairs, while the land was overrun with robbers and Condottieri—a species of robber of the worst kind; for they

levied contributions under an act of parliament then much in fashion—brute force. Giacinto Paoli, therefore, considered his friend might have met with some misfortune in travelling to join him. He had perhaps fallen into the power of the Genoese, which would lead, perchance, to imprisonment for life.

These thoughts, and some others that would intrude themselves on his mind, found the Corsican Knight somewhat out of spirits the night of the masked ball.

"Well, Signor Paoli," said the Lady Paulina, "what is to be your character to-night? You have not told us what dress you have selected. That mad-cap, Steno, is going as, Folly—with cap and bells; and Julia is positively displeased; so he has consented to change his costume—after an hour's sport—as he says."

"A simple domino, Paulina," answered the Knight, "will do to disguise my figure; and that is all I wish, as I prefer being amused to

the trouble of amusing. You and the Lady Julia have, I see, selected the simple, but graceful, habits of the Dalmatian Maidens."

"Here comes our dear father, as Soliman the Magnificent," said Paulina; "and magnificent he truly looks; and see, here is Julia, for once, captivated with folly."

Count Steno entered the room, leading his betrothed.

Covering themselves with ample mantles, the whole party proceeded to the bank of the canal, and entered the handsome and beautifully decorated gondola of the Marchese. They were soon mingled amid the countless numbers gliding along the still waters of the Grand Canal. The ladies were delighted with the gay and brilliant scene; for the Palaces on each side, were splendidly illuminated. Even our hero's spirits revived under the influence of the hour, and the spell that youth and beauty cast around the heart of man—when the softer sex reign triumphant. The noble

arch of the Rialto, over which blazed the arms of the republic, in every colored lamp—elicited the admiration of all—as they shot beneath its curve.

But the principal attraction was the Ducal Palace and the Piazza of St. Mark. Every pillar was wreathed with alternate circles of flowers and lamps; while the square itself, lighted by innumerable torches, appeared one dense mass of human heads.

Tha nobility being provided with private tickets of invitation, were allowed ingress to the Palace, through private portals—and through these the Marchese and his party entered, and proceeded to ascend the celebrated staircase of the Palace, called the Giant's Stairs.

Hundreds of masks covered this noble and ample ascent: inhabitants of every clime then known, appeared strangely mingled, but all seeking one object—pleasure. Ushers, with long white rods, stood at the top, to shew

those provided with private cards, into a more select portion of the Ducal Palace, where the Doge and Dogeressa would appear.

Count Steno, with the Lady Julia, led the way up the Giant's Stairs. The Marchese and Marchessa followed, and our hero and the beautiful Paulina came next, the latter full of life and spirits, happy to be leaning on the arm of one, who, in spite of all her efforts, was dear to her young and guileless heart.

Naturally of a gay and cheerful spirit, the Corsican rapidly caught the infection of his fair companion's spirit, and, becoming unusually gay, entered into the folly of the hour with animation.

They had nearly gained the summit of the stairs, and Giacinto was bending his head to catch a sentence from the lips of Paulina—for the noise around was great—when a voice close to his ear—whispered—

"You are watched! keep on your mask!"

Surprised, he turned quickly round; but in

the motley group, eagerly striving to gain the summit, it would have been folly to fix on any individual as the person who had uttered the warning.

"Who are you seeking, Signor Paoli?" demanded Paulina. "Our party have reached the top. We shall soon get rid of this promiscuous crowd."

"Some masquerade trick, I suppose," returned our hero, who carried his mask in his hand. "I thought some one whispered in my ear."

"Oh, you are new to these, our Venetian revels, Sir Knight," observed Paulina, laughingly. "You will find that many will whisper in your ear; but you must let the words find their way out at the other."

On gaining the summit, the Marchese and his party were ushered into a range of splendidly decorated and brilliantly lighted saloons, already filled with the high nobility of Venice.

"Well, fair maiden," exclaimed Count Steno, to Paulina, shaking his bells, for he still resolved to have an hour's frolic—as Folly. "Would it please you, before you plunge into the vortex of pleasure, that I read you a homily on the dangers that surround you."

"Away!" exclaimed the maiden, with a laugh.

> Folly, away with your cap and bells,
> Pleasure now the hour rules;
> Still, thy silly tinkling tells,
> Now all men here are fools."

"By Jove, I have hopes of you now Paulina! I never knew you rhyme before—I see it's no use for Folly to talk sense, so I'll away. Take care yourself, Giacinto. Hide that handsome face of thine, or you will have all the women —making love to you."

Our hero did as he was bidden. He put on the mask, much as he disliked it; and

Paulina, proposed a stroll through the saloons before joining the dancers. "I wish," said she, "to show you our Doge and Dogeressa, and many of our nobility, who, will with His Highness, stand unmasked."

Accordingly, passing through several saloons, they came to one, at the upper end of which was a slightly-raised platform covered with crimson cloth, whereon were placed two richly carved chairs. Standing on this platform, were the Doge and Dogeressa, and about a score of the nobility of Venice unmasked. These nobles, though they carried a mask in their hands, wore no fancy dress of any sort, but were attired in the costly and rich dress of the times. A very few years after, a law was passed by the rulers of Venice regulating the dress of the Venetian, and forcing the wealthest noble to wear a cloak of Paduan manufacture, precisely the same as the meanest artizan.

At the period of which we write, the

nobles dressed as they pleased. Their attire was generally composed of rich flowered silk, edged with costly lace, and their doublets were of gold and silver brocade.

"And now what think you of our Doge and his consort?" questioned Paulina, as they approached close to the platform.

Giacinto looked long and fixedly on the remarkblea lineaments of the unfortunate Marino Faliero —An agitated expression was upon his features: his dark grey eye was keen and penetrating, though he had reached seventy-six years of age. His glance remained not for a minute fixed: it roamed over the vast saloon as if in search of some wished-for object, and he appeared to give but little attention to the conversation of the nobles around him.

"If I were to judge from the human countenance," said the Corsican to Paulina, "I should say, your sovereign, with all his power, is not a happy man."

"And yet you may read his countenance wrongly, Signor Paoli. But the Dogeressa?"

"She is beautiful, in truth; and apparently full of spirits and vivacity. Who is that tall and handsome noble with whom she is conversing?"

"That is the Doge's nephew, Bertuccio—Faliero; and that stern, fierce-looking man next him, with his arms folded, is the great admiral of the Arsenal, Bertuccio Israello—who commands the Bucentaur, and is answerable for its safety with his life. There, next him is the proudest noble in Venice," and, whispering, she added, "one of the councel of ten, Giovanni Delfino. On the other side of the Dogeressa, is the head of the noble house of Lioni. The rest are not conspicuous characters, so I pass them over. Now let us join the dancers."

The night, like every other night devoted to pleasure, drew rapidly to a close, when the

Marchesa and her daughters expressed a wish to retire, as most of the nobility had already done so. Accordingly, Giacinto, the Marchese, and Count Steno, conducted the ladies to their gondola. The Marchese insisted on the young men staying longer; but Paoli was not inclined to remain, till Steno whispered in his ear, "you *must* stay—I have something to communicate."

After the departure of the gondola, the young men returned to the still-crowded saloons; for though most of the nobility and their familes, with the Doge and Dogeressa, had retired after supper, there still remained in the saloons great numbers of the wealthy citizens and the young Signors of good families.

"And now, Michaello, what have you to say to recompense me for my loss of rest, and pleasant dreams?" asked Paoli.

"Pleasant dreams, no doubt, when you *do* dream, Giacinto," replied the Count, look-

ing pleased—"with a fair maid of Dalmatia in the foreground of the picture. But listen to me. Though you did not know me in my change of dress, I was near you several times during the night; and, singular enough, every time I cast my eyes upon you, I saw, following you, a middle-sized broad-shouldered man, attired as a Palmer. I could not help noticing this figure; for every time I saw *you*, I saw the Palmer within a yard of you; and last of all, as you were passing from the stairs, through a crowded and somewhat dimly lighted passage, to the canal, by Jove, I observed the same Palmer—thrust himself through the crowd and endeavour to get near you. Now Giacinto, in Venice it is not pleasant to have a substantial shadow dogging one beneath the piazzi of St Mark. So I even stepped in between the Palmer and you. Balked in his object, whatever it was, he turned round and disappeared into the palace amid the crowd. I must confess it, we Venetians are a jealous

race; and sometimes there is an awkward way of removing a favoured lover here in this city of the Waves."

Giacinto recollected the warning he had received on entering the palace, and mentioned the circumstance to Steno.

"Then it's very clear, *amico mio*," returned Steno, "that you have a friend and a foe amid the motley group around us. Just stay where you are. I will go and change my dress. We will then have a turn through all the saloons. I will keep near you, and see if we cannot unmask this Palmer."

After the departure of the Count, our hero fell into a train of thought far from pleasing. The observation made by Steno evidently showed that if *he* thought him attached to the beautiful Paulina, others might think the same. Inwardly he taxed his own heart: there all was confusion. The fair, youthful, image of Agnes Alviano rose in imagination before him, and left him in doubt and perplexity. That he

admired, nay, more than admired, the Marchese's daughter, he could not deny; and had he never seen the young Agnes, there is scarcely a doubt but that his love would all have centred in Paulina.

So immersed in thought became the Corsican, that he forgot Count Steno, and the intention of his absence. Having taken off his mask to breathe a cooler air, Giacinto rambled from one saloon into another, without paying much heed to those about him.

He had walked into a narrow corridor thronged with masks, and was about to retrace his steps, when he suddenly received a violent push, and at the same moment, a stiletto, aimed by a strong hand, pierced his mantle, and slightly grazed his side. Recovering himself, and turning rapidly round, pushing aside the crowd of masks—none of whom seemed aware of the attempted assassination—our hero obtained a glimpse of a man in a Palmer's dress,

answering to the description given him of that character by Count Steno.

The Palmer was urging his way through the crowd, and our hero hastily followed. The Palmer moved rapidly, and so bent was Paoli upon seizing his assailant, that he followed him into a part of the Ducal Palace not appropriated to the festivities, and into which he had got by darting after the fugitive through a pair of folding doors.

But the Palmer had disappeared, Giacinto looked anxiously around. He found himself in a long colonnaded corridor, dimly lighted by a few half-expiring lamps, and which left the space under the colonnade in deep gloom.

"I have no business here," thought our hero, turning to look for the door through which he had entered. At that moment, a person attired in black came forth, holding a lamp, followed by a figure enveloped in a mantle, whose extraordinary height at once

rivetted the attention of the Corsican, as he stood in the deep shade of a massive pillar. He was not observed by the strangers, who proceeed within a few yards of him.

As they passed, the tall stranger, whose head was covered by a slouched beaver, with a thick, drooping plume, stopped, and taking off his mask, placed it in his attendant's hand. With a start of astonishment, Paoli gazed upon the features now exposed. He could not be mistaken: the face was too deeply engraven upon his memory.

"Duke Guarnieri!—and in the Palace of St. Mark!" inwardly ejaculated Giacinto.

Having received the mask and mantle, the attendant, or usher, pointed to a folding door directly opposite to where our hero stood, saying—

"That is the door, Signor—Knock thrice. I will await your return in the blue chamber."

Guarnieri advanced to the door, while the usher retired.

Amazed at what he beheld, Giacinto did not move His eyes, by a kind of fascination, followed the towering form of the German, whose magnificent figure appeared to singular advantage in the rich dress he wore.

The Duke knocked thrice at the folding doors, which were covered with crimson cloth. Paoli's eyes were on the doors, when they fell back, and a blaze of light issued forth. The Duke entered, and the doors were immediately closed. Short as was the glance that our hero gained of the interior of the chamber, what he saw increased his amazement. He beheld a table covered with crimson cloth, round which stood many signors, richly habited and unmasked. One only of the group riveted the glance of the Knight, and that one bore the attenuated features of Marino Faliero.

"I would rather not have seen all this," mentally exclaimed Paoli, as he slowly moved from his position. I want not to dive into the secrets of St. Mark. 'Tis very, very strange! But it concerns not me."

As he regained the door by which he had entered the corridor, two ushers in black, carrying lights, crossed his path, and stopped staring at him in great apparent surprise. One of them, in a cold, measured tone, said—

"Signor, may I request to know your business in this part of the Ducal Palace?"

"I have wandered hither," said Paoli, slightly hesitating, for at the moment he scarcely knew what to say. But resolving to declare the simple fact, he added—"I was stabbed by a person in the disguise of a Palmer, and pursued him. I lost him here, and was not aware, till then, that I had wandered so far from the scene of festivity."

The man looked keenly in the face of our

hero as he spoke, and then whispered a moment with his companion. At length, turning to the Knight, he said —

"You will oblige me with your name and abode, Signor."

The man spoke in a much more civil and obliging tone when he had received our hero's answer, which he wrote down on a small ivory tablet, and then requested the Corsican to follow them, as the guests had all quitted the Ducal Palace.

"We will show you an entrance into St. Mark's Square by a private portal," said the usher.

Having passed through several passages and chambers, they threw open a small, strong door, saying—

"This will lead you into the square." And wishing him good night, they closed the door.

Giacinto Paoli stepped forward, and soon perceived he was in the piazza, and that the

lights were fast expiring. Making the best of his way to the borders of the canal, he found Count Steno and his Squire Pulini pacing the quay, and anxiously examining the last stragglers as they took to their gondolas. The former looked amazingly surprised when he recognised, him saying—

"In the name of St. Mark, Giacinto, where do you come from? I have been very uneasy since I missed you. You surely never left the palace by ——"

"The way we went in," interrupted Paoli, laughing; "that I certainly did *not*. But let us to our gondola. By the Pope's head, the sun is shining in the eastern sky! What shameful rakes we are!"

As they entered the gondola, Steno seriously repeated his question as to how he had quitted the Palace of St. Mark. "For," added he, "I looked through every chamber for you."

"Except the right one, Count," returned Paoli; "for the palace assuredly contained

me. I was excessively near getting a few inches of cold steel as a remembrance of this festivity."

"Ha! say you so?" ejaculated Count Steno; "that accursed Palmer, no doubt."

"The very one, Steno; he led me a chase into a private part of the palace, and then I lost him. But meeting two ushers, they shewed me out by a private portal."

Our hero confined the recital of his adventure to these few simple words. He felt he had no right to pry into the secrets of the Doge's Palace, and therefore remained silent concerning what he had seen.

Thus, that which he considered right, in the sequel, nearly proved his destruction.

Steno made few remarks: he was surprised and seemed thoughtful. And thus they parted to take a few hours' repose.

CHAPTER X.

THE ARREST.

NOTHING of material consequence occurred amongst the inmates of the Tiepolo Palace for some days after the events that had occurred at the ducal *fête*.

Paoli was occupied daily in seeing every preparation hastened on board the galley he was to command. Notwithstanding his constant occupations, his thoughts would at times revert to the events of that evening when Duke Guarnieri had appeared before his astonished

sight within the private galleries of the Palace of St. Mark. He was uneasy, for he felt satisfied that he had, by a singular coincidence, become possessed of a state secret—a dangerous possession, inasmuch as to preserve state secrets, human life, even in the highest grades, was a thing of nought with the stern tribunal that awed and ruled the Venetian people.

In a few days more, the whole Venetian fleet would be ready for sea. In fact, Giacinto —as little inclined to feel apprehension of danger as any mortal living—would very willingly have exchanged the gaieties of Venice for the stormy waters of the Adriatic.

There were moments when the events of the last few months intruded themselves painfully upon his mind: his heart wavered strangely with respect to its feelings towards the Lady Paulina. His manner, notwithstanding every effort to the contrary, became embarrassed; and the beautiful Venetian grew less cheerful and social. Before the arrival of the Corsican,

Paulina Tiepolo was surrounded by a circle of of passionate admirers. She felt no reluctance in dismissing her train of lovers; for the maiden's heart was in truth untouched. That the Corsican, as time rolled on, was making a favourable impression on her, she did not deny in communing with her secret thoughts. But, fortunately for her own happiness, she was warned in time, Women are much quicker in reading the thoughts than men. She saw and felt, by the manner and conduct of Paoli, that a struggle was in his heart between a feeling of love for her, and a romantic passion for her cousin, Agnes Alviano. In the end, we have no doubt the feeling Paoli indulged for the maiden he had rescued, would have given way to a pure and sincere love for the fair Paulina; but an event occurred that separated their destinies for ever.

We do not hold up our hero as a model of human perfection—far from it. Impetuous and violent in disposition — wavering and

somewhat fickle in his admiration of the softer sex, and unrelenting in his hatred of the oppressors of his country, the Corsican was, nevertheless, a faithful and firm friend, a true patriot, generous, unselfish, and of an unshrinking and untiring spirit during adversity and severe trials. These last, however, had softened, in a great measure, his fiery and impatient temper; and his fickleness of heart was atoned for by a true and noble devotion to one who every way deserved it.

His galley was now fully equipped and manned. Several Corsican exiles had joined him; for thousands of the natives, too stubborn to submit to the tyranny of their oppressors, fled the Island, and sought service under the banner of any continental state, except those in league with Genoa.

The two pilots, so anxiously expected by the Marchese, had arrived, and had, at once, accepted service on beard "The Lion."

Returning, one evening, from the galley, which was then lying in the lagune, with the rest of the fleet, in passing up the canal that led to the Tiepolo Palace, a youth, closely wrapped in a mantle and slouched beaver, approached the edge of the canal, and threw into the Corsican's gondola a paper folded round a stone.

Pulini picked it up, and muttering—

"Some fresh mischief, I suppose," handed it to his master, who beheld the action.

Unfolding the paper, Paoli perceived it was a letter directed to himself. Somewhat surprised, he read the following words:—

"Quit the territories of the Venetian Republic before the next sun rises. You are denounced to the Counsel of Ten, as a traitor leagued with Genoa, and a spy in the secret pay of that Republic. To be suspected only, is death in Venice."

"This warning is from Carlo, the page whose life you saved."

"This hint is not to be despised," thought Paoli, "notwithstanding the absurdity of the accusation." Then, addressing the gondolier, he said—"Turn back, Juliano. The Marchese is even now on board the galley of Pisano, with Count Steno. Better to meet a charge than wait till it meets you. Do you, Pulini, land at these steps. Proceed to the Tiepolo Palace, and just put our mails in readiness, should it be necessary to cross the lagunes this night."

"*Santa Madonna*, signor," exclaimed Pulini, "what's in the wind now?"

"Why, nothing very particular," returned Paoli, with a smile at the rueful countenance of his squire. "Nevertheless, it may be necessary for our health to change the air of Venice for the more bracing climate on the other side of the lagunes."

"Confound their masking and secret ways,"

muttered the Squire, as he leaped on shore. "I hear there is a spy of the state in every mansion in Venice; and that a man may go to bed comfortable, and yet be seen hanging, head downwards, between the red columns of St. Mark, the next morning."

"I fear, Signor," said Juliano, in a low voice —as the gondola shot from the canal into the lagune—"I fear you have received evil tidings in that paper. An innocent man, Signor, has no chance if even suspected. Months will he lie buried in those accursed dungeons of St. Mark, even before he is examined as to his crime."

"Something of that kind crosses my mind, Juliano," returned the Knight. "I am perfectly innocent and ignorant of having done ought to attract the notice of the rulers of Venice; but the name affixed to this paper assures me that I have little time to lose. That I have been accused by one who would stop at

no falsehood to gratify his revenge, I feel satisfied."

"Alas, Signor, should you have, in truth, a bitter enemy in Venice—if the dagger fails, they have only to drop a line in the "Lion's Mouth," and, innocent or guilty, the victim is sure to linger in horrid—Jesu Maria!" exclaimed the startled gondolier, as the oar fell from his hand, "we are lost!"

Casting off his jacket, to the astonishment of Paoli, Juliano dropped over the stern of the gondola, and, diving beneath the calm water, disappeared from the sight of our amazed hero. They were then just passing a small fleet of fishing boats; it was getting dusk, and scarcely had the gondolier disappeared, when a long black gondola, with its sable awning, and rowed by twelve oarsmen, all masked, shot alongside of Paoli's bark. Immediately, four men, vested in sable garments, closely masked and armed, leaped on board. The Knight sprang

to his feet, and his ready weapon flew from its sheath—as he stood ready to receive his enemies.

"Signor Paoli, this is madness. I arrest you as a prisoner of state," uttered one of the figures who approached him. "To draw a weapon upon the officers of St Mark, Signor, is treason, without other charge; your sword, Sir Knight."

Paoli for a moment was undecided. On terra firma, he would not have hesitated, but with his usual impetuosity and recklessness, have stood upon the defensive, no matter what odds he should have to encounter.

"For what offence, Signor, am I thus arrested?" demanded he.

"Treason, Signor," calmly replied the officer.

"Treason!" echoed Paoli, bitterly. "On such a charge, a Paoli never surrendered his good sword. Let it sleep in the waters of your sullen lagunes."

And the same instant he hurled the weapon through the opening of the awning. He heard the splash of the sword as it divided the still waters, and a fierce smile was on his lip as he turned towards the officers, saying—

"I am ready to do your bidding."

"Where is your gondolier, Signor?" suddenly demanded one of the strangers after having carefully scarched the boat.

"He was too wise, Signor," replied Paoli, "or not polite enough to await your arrival."

The men whispered for a moment. Two of the masked boatmen entered Paoli's gondola, while the rest, followed by Paoli, went beneath the dismal awning of the state gondola. Handing the Kinght a large mantle and a mask, which allowed facilities for breathing, but not for seeing, he was requested to put them on. Without replying, he did so, and throwing himself upon a bench, remained

buried in thought while the gondola pulled rapidly away.

One thing Paoli rejoiced at; and this was the probable escape of Juliano, who would, without doubt, inform Count Steno of his arrest. Had the gondolier been taken, his fate most likely would have been either banishment to some Venetian colony, or a dungeon for life. So fearful indeed, and so terrible was the policy of the Venetian rulers at that period, and long after, that often, in arresting a doomed victim those witnessing his arrest incurred the sure penalty of at least a long imprisonment. The fate of the ill-starred family of the Foscari will be an everlasting stain upon the page of Venetian history, which neither their glorious deeds, nor proud conquests, will ever efface.

As to the charge of treason, Paoli did not bestow upon it a thought. He felt the utter impossibility of such an imputation being

maintained for a moment, when examined. What he dreaded, was the long and dreary confinement he might, notwithstanding the efforts of his powerful friends, undergo before he would be brought before that mysterious tribunal at whose name even the proudest and haughtiest noble of Venice trembled. That Duke Guarnieri had somehow discovered his residence in Venice, was certain. To accuse him of any crime, however monstrous and improbable, was easy enough. The open mouths of the two Lions standing at the head of the Giant's Stairs leading to the interior of St Mark's Palace, were daily the means, through which a vindictive enemy might get rid of a foe which no other scheme could remove.

Individuals frequently and mysteriously disappeared from society, and were no more heard of. Yet no man said, "In the dungeons of St Mark, or beneath the leads of that fearful Palace, the victim is to be found." No!

The knowledge of their fate remained locked within the close recesses of their own hearts, and even the name of the wretched lost one perished.

Strange, that men thus bowed to a power of their own creating—that ten individuals should thus smite with impunity the thousands that surrounded them; and that this secret and invisible sword should hang constantly over their heads—sleeping or waking—even in the very chambers of their Palaces, uncertain that the most devoted of their domestics was not a paid hierling and spy of their tyrants.

The giddy and thoughtless Venetians, nevertheless lived on, glorying in their country's glory—boasting of their wealth and widespread commerce—their days devoted to luxury—their nights to music, feasting, gambling, and intrigue. Bravos walking the purlieus of St Mark—almost with impunity—always

ready, for a well filled purse, to rid any one of a rival; while the sullen waters of their dark lagune offered a ready tomb for the victims of private vengeance, or state executions.

Such was Venice during the middle ages; and such it continued, with little variation, till the first half of the seventeenth century, when its glory and power began rapidly to decay. Finally the French revolution swept it, and its secret tribunal, from the political face of the glode.

CHAPTER XI.

THE COUNCIL.

SEVERAL days had passed over the head of our hero in solitary confinement. His chamber was a vault beneath the Palace of St Mark; but it was not the terrible dungeon he had pictured to himself. The furniture, it is true, consisted of nothing more than a very old oak table and bench and a tolerable bed; nor was it very damp; but the dim glare of a miserable oil lamp poorly compensated for the exclusion of heaven's light.

Once a day his jailer—a man cased in tight-fitting garments of sable, always masked and always silent—visited him with food and fresh oil. Two others similarly habited, paced day and night without the door; so at least Psoli judged; for he heard the hollow tread of their steps, though the sound of the human voice never reached his ear.

The Corsican was rapidly losing patience: he began to imagine his friends had forgotten him, or that their interest and power was as nothing with the terrible few that governed Venice.

"Surely," thought the knight as he paced the narrow limits of his chamber, "the mere accusation of a German free-booter could not, even with the tyrants of Venice, thus condemn a man to this cruel injustice."

At length, at the expiration of the tenth day, four sable individuals entered his chamber, and one of them, handing him a mask, similar to that which had blindfolded him on,

his entrance to the vaults beneath San Marco, said, in a low voice—

"Remove not your mask till desired—I will conduct you, signor. Be silent."

Rejoiced at seeing these symptoms of a change, Paoli obeyed with alacrity; and after traversing innumerable passages, but without mounting or descending any steps, his guides stopped. Not a sound, save the reverberating echo of their own footsteps, disturbed the tomb-like silence of those dreary vaults. The very air—cold, damp, and noxious, struck a chill to the heart, But the unshrinking spirit of the Corsican repelled the approaches of fear, and when the man who had guided him, said, in a low tone — "Remove your mask—" he did so, with a rapid and impatient movement. There was nothing very remarkable or terrifying in what he beheld. He was standing alone, (for his guides were gone) in the middle of a circular chamber, the walls of

"By birth," began the inquisitor, "you are a Corsican. As such you have passed yourself in society since your residence in Venice. From what motive did you quit your native land?"

"To save my head, Signor, upon which the Genoese Government was pleased to set an exorbitant price."

As Paoli spoke, the secretary at the table wrote down each question and answer.

"You were, or are, a proscribed man, then. Was it for rebellion against the Genoese Government that a price was set upon your head?"

"No, Signor," hastily replied the Corsican; and his voice—for he spoke indignantly—rang through the vaulted chamber. If the galleys of Genoa invaded your lagunes, and your citizens took up arms to repel them, would you stigmatize the patriots with the name of rebels? No, Signor, I was proscribed because the name of Paoli was the watch-word of

freedom. As well might the wolf and the lamb form a social compact as a Paoli accede to any terms with the cruel oppressors of his native land. So much, Signors, for your charge of being in the pay of Genoa."

"You must answer with less intemperance, Signor," interrupted the mask, in a quick and angry voice. "Confine yourself to answering questions, and do not anticipate them. What was your motive in seeking to enter into the service of the Venetian Republic?"

"To strike another blow," replied Paoli, at the hated foe of my country. I heard war was declared against Genoa; that was one reason for preferring the service of Venice. Another was that in the Marchese Tiepolo, I had a second father who would, I felt certain, forward my views."

"You accompanied the Marchese and his family to the masked ball, given at the Ducal Palace. Now, during the festivities at

the Palace, did any thing unusual occur to you?"

"Nothing uncommon, I am told, in Venice, Signor; but merely an attempt upon my life by some unknown miscreant."

"Were you able to arrest the author of this attempt upon your life?"

"I was not so fortunate," replied Paoli. "He escaped by taking refuge in some of the passages leading from that part of the Palace devoted to the festivities."

"Did you enter any of the chambers *not* set apart for the reception of the guests?"

"I lost myself in pursuing the person who attempted my life. Two ushers, whom I encountered, informed me I was entering forbidden apartments; and, on my giving my name and address, conducted me without the Palace."

"Signor Paoli," continued the inquisitor, in a very marked tone—"Previous to meeting the ushers of the Palace, did you

behold any other person, known or unknown to you?"

"I certainly was surprised," returned the Corsican, after a moment's pause, "on beholding, traversing the chambers of the Ducal Palace, a German leader of Condottieri, styled Duke Guarnieri."

"You are acquainted then," demanded the inquisitor, "with Duke Guarnieri?"

"I met him some months back in the Florentine States. Chance threw me in his way; but our intimacy consisted in a very eager endeavour on the part of the Duke to take my life, in revenge for my having, the day previously, slain his only son, Ludovico Guarnieri, in defence of a party of travellers, attacked by him and his lawless adherents."

"Slew Ludovico Guarnieri!" echoed the Venetian, with a start, while two silent figures behind the inquisitor whispered for a moment.

There was a pause of some moments, during

which the inquisitor drew an ivory tablet from his vest, looked at it, made some mark, and then said—

"Was Duke Guarnieri alone when you saw him? And was he aware that you beheld him?"

"The German followed a guide, Signor," replied the Knight. "He could not be aware of my presence, as I was behind a pillar of the saloon."

"Now, Signor Paoli," continued the Venetian, speaking slowly and emphatically, "on the next two or three questions in a great measure rests your fate. Hitherto you have answered without hesitation. Answer me now in the same spirit. Where did you see Duke Guarnieri go after entering the gallery in which you beheld him?"

"I saw him enter a chamber directly facing where I stood."

"Did you see within that chamber?"

"It was but a very brief glance that I cast

within that chamber; so momentary, in truth, that what my gaze there rested upon was more like a vision, so rapidly did the door close."

"Nevertheless," quietly returned the questioner, in a somewhat sterner voice, "you *did* see within that chamber. What did you see?"

"I had a rapid glance, signor, of a large table covered with crimson cloth, and round that table stood several signors unmasked,"

"Were any of those unmasked, signors," eagerly demanded the inquisitor, leaning forward, "known to you, Signor Paoli, by sight or remembrance?"

During his examination, Paoli, though answering briefly to the questions put to him, was nevertheless busy with his thoughts. There was something more in his examination than the apparent purpose of finding him guilty of the charges laid against him. The evident anxiety of the inquisitor, as he contin-

ued his interrogations, especially the last few questions, caused the Corsican to pause for a moment at the last question.

"Perhaps," thought he, "I may by my answer be bringing destruction on others."

"You hesitate, Signor Paoli," said the Venetian, sternly. Beware how you trifle with those appointed to hear you. I once more demand—Did you recognise within that chamber, into which you saw Duke Guarnieri enter, any countenance known to you?"

"Signor," replied Paoli, calmly, "I have sworn to answer your questions briefly and truly. I tell you again, the time allowed me to look within that room was so momentary, and my acquaintance with the faces, I was merely able to glance at, so very limited, that I cannot positively assert, and still less swear, to the face of any individual in that chamber."

The inquisitor half rose from his chair, and tched forth his hand towards a small silver

bell upon the table. The other figures appeared agitated. But, re-seating himself, the inquisitor, in a low, bitter tone, said—

"Once more I bid you beware. There are other means at hand to unlock the unruly tongues of traitors."

The fierce temper of the Corsican was now roused, and the hot blood rushed to cheek and temple.

"Traitor!" echoed he, in a voice that startled all present, so deep and passionate were its tones—"Traitor! Who dares say a Paoli is a traitor? Where are your proofs? What single word or deed can you lay to my charge?"

"Silence, rash man!" exclaimed one of the hitherto silent Signors behind the inquisitor. "You shall have proofs."

Making a sign, the secretary at the table opened a drawer, and, taking out a bundle of papers, selected two. They were letters.

"Hand one to the prisoner," said the ques-

tioner of Paoli. "Look at that address," he cantinued, as the Corsican, with some surprise, took the letter from the table.

"It is directed to me," replied the knight; "but I know neither the writing nor the letter, which I never had in my hand before."

"Take care, Signor Paoli, take care," said the Venetian, sneeringly; "read its contents."

Paoli did so, and with perfect calmness.

"I can only say, Signor," said he, "that the whole is an accursed falsehood; a tissue of improbabilities. I know nothing of it or its writer, and cannot understand the object of my name being so used."

"And yet, Signor Paoli, that letter, and two others, much to the same purport, were found amongst your papers, and seized the same night you were arrested, when your apartments in the Tiepolo Palace were searched,

and your papers secured. You deny those letters."

Laying his hand upon the bell, it rang clear and distinct in the silence that reigned around.

Paoli now awaited the result with considerable curiosity. He plainly perceived there was something deeper in the plot against him, than the mere accusation of an anonymous letter dropped into the lion's mouth, as he considered, by an agent of Duke Guarnieri.

In a few moments, the sable cloth was thrown back, and two figures, similar to those who served as his guides, came forward, conducting a tall man, closely muffled and masked. At a sign, the two familiars disappeared.

Turning towards the masked figure, who had advanced to within a few steps of the Corsican, the inquisitor said—

"Swear by that crucifix to answer with truth any question I may demand."

The stranger took the oath required; but Paoli, who observed his movements keenly, thought his hand shook as he grasped the image of his Redeemer.

"Now, Signor, answer me," continued the inquisitor. "Do you recognise the face and person of the prisoner beside you?"

"I do, Signor," replied the stranger, in a low, but audible, voice.

Paoli thought he had heard the voice before; but no effort could recall the time or person.

"Who is the prisoner?" demanded the inquisitor.

"A Corsican by birth; his name Giacinto Paoli."

Turning to the secretary, the Venetian said—

"Read aloud that letter of which the prisoner denies all knowledge."

In a distinct tone, the secretary read the following lines:

"*Amico Mio*,

"You were wrong to trust Beltramo Di Bergamo: he is too timid for a command, besides being devoted as a slave to the family of Nicolo Lioni—a greater tyrant than any of your Genoese rulers. However, we have guarded against that. Sixteen is now our number. The tolling of the bell of San Marco—never rung except by order of the Doge—is the signal. Be wary, and be prepared. Your love of freedom and hatred of tyrants, make you the fit associate of those who have sworn to crush every noble in Venice, and rid the earth of a race of despots."

After a moment's pause, the inquisitor de-

manded of the mask if he knew the writer of that letter?

"Signor, I do."

"Name him."

"Bertucci Faliero, nephew of Marino Faliero, the Doge."

"And that letter was written," pursued the inquisitor, "and intended for whom?"

"It was directed to Giacinto Paoli, and written by me."

Before a word could be said, Paoli strode across the chamber. His passion was roused beyond all control: in his rage, he saw not the confusion amongst the inquisitor and his colleagues, but, seizing the masked stranger in a grasp of iron, he tore the mask from his face, exclaiming—

"Villain and liar! What could have prompted you to such a crime?"

As the mask fell to the ground, Paoli gazed with astonishment upon the features of the

stranger, who was, in truth, Bertucci Faliero. Paoli had seen him often at the Palace Tiepolo. Before the Corsican's arrival, Bertucci was an eager suitor for the hand of the Marchese's daughter, the Lady Paulina.

In his astonishment, Paoli heeded not the loud ringing of the bell, at the sound of which six figures, in sable garments, hastily entered the chamber.

"Seize those traitors!" fiercely and loudly exclaimed the inquisitor.

The first that advanced was felled to the ground, senseless, by the excited Corsican, who, losing all command of his fiery temper, would doubtless have sacrificed his life and those of others, when a concealed door was hastily thrown open, and a Signor, richly habited and unmasked, followed by three others, wearing their masks, entered the chamber.

At a signal from this Signor, the familiars, who had drawn their short swords, worn

beneath their mantles, fell back. Even Paoli stood transfixed; for in the Signor, richly habited and unmasked, he beheld the features of the noblest of the Venetian nobility—one reverenced and loved by all classes; and whom Paoli knew to be the most powerful member of the Council of Ten—Giovanni Gradinegro, whom he had often seen at the Palace of the Marchese Tiepolo.

As Paoli stood looking at the Marchese Gradinegro, the masked Signor behind him, for an instant, raised his mask. Starting with surprise, the Corsican beheld the features of Count Steno. With a warning gesture, the mask was replaced.

"Signor Paoli, this intemperate passion and outrage against your appointed judges," observed the Marchese Gradinegro, addressing the Corsican, "would in any court have led to fatal consequences. Had you mastered your temper but a very few moments, your deliverance was at hand; for I came hither for the

express purpose of declaring you perfectly innocent of all the charges laid against you. How that knowledge has been obtained, it is not the custom of this tribunal to disclose. You were brought here on a most serious charge, at the very time a plot has been discovered, thanks to Divine Providence, that had for its intention not only to overthrow the existing government, but the massacre of the entire Venetian nobility. You can find no fault with your judge that he endeavoured, by the utmost ingenuity, to find you guilty or not guilty."

"Pardon me, my lord," interrupted Paoli, struck by the impressive manner and voice of Gradinegro, "I found no fault with my judge. My unpardonable intemperance and passion was first excited by being threatened with torture."

The Marchese started slightly, and looked round at Paoli's inquisitor. If the inquisitor beheld the look of Gradinegro, his mask pre-

vented the betrayal of his feelings—Paoli continued—

"This Signor," pointing to Bertucci Faliero, who stood with folded arms gazing with a look of fixed despair upon Gradinegro, "this Signor was examined; and he stated that the letters, accusing me of treason, and, by their purport, leading my judges to suppose, I was joined in the very plot of which you, my lord, speak, were written by him. God knows, I have borne much with patience; but when the Signor, who was then masked, suddenly avowed that he it was that wrote the accursed letters, a burning desire to unmask the traitor overpowered my reason and judgment. That Bertucci Faliero should degrade himself thus, and for what reason—as I never, in word or deed, injured him—I leave it to him to say."

Giovanni Gradinegro, who was destined to be the next Doge of Venice, stood leaning his

arm upon a chair, patiently listening to the Corsican.

"Bertucci Faliero," said the Marchese, in a low and melancholy tone of voice, addressing that individual, "you have already been tried and judged. Why—"

At that moment, the inquisitor, who had examined Paoli, rose from his chair, and, approaching the Marchese, whispered a sentence in his ear—Gradinegro started—paused a moment—and then said—

"Be it so. Let the prisoners be removed to their cells till to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" bitterly muttered the unfortunate Faliero. Then, rapidly turning to the Corsican, he said, in a quick, agitated tone—"Signor Paoli, I have deeply wronged you. When brought here, it was not expected I would declare myself the author of those letters."

"Remove the prisoner!" exclaimed the

inquisitor, Gradinegro having already left the chamber.

"Farewell!" exclaimed Faliero. "Forgive me. I spoke to save you. To-morrow will behold me hanging between the red columns of St. Mark. But my last breath shall be spent in a curse upon our tyrants."

As he struggled to utter those words, he was hurried from the chamber, as was also Paolo, and re-conducted to his cell.

CHAPTER XII.

THE EXECUTION.

THE memorable morning of the seventeenth of April broke over the broad lagune, and the lordly city of Venice, with all the splendour of a southern spring. At a very early hour, the Piazzas of San Marco were thronged with countless numbers; yet, though the sun shone, darting its bright beams upon pinnacles and towers—upon the noble column of the Piazza and Piazzetta of St. Mark—and though the waters of the lagune sparkled like gold, and

the light barks of the Venetians, as they shot past, urged by the gentle breeze that merely played upon the waters, appeared like gigantic birds, with their wings spread, (for the latine sails of the early times set "wing on wing" as mariners term it in the Medeterranean, have that appearance) yet with all the beauty and splendour of the scene around, the vast crowd that thronged the square, seemed struck by the Goddess of Silence—groups moved along with ominous looks—many with scowling features and violent gestures—but one thing was certain, namely, that all eyes were directed towards the red columns of St. Mark in the Piazzetta; and certainly the sight that there met the eye was quite sufficient to erase all the beauty of the surrounding scenery from the thoughts and sight of the multitude.

Between the red columns, hung, some singly, some in groups, were numerous bodies. While, in a more conspicuous manner, was suspended the two bodies of Bertucci Israello,

admiral of the arsenal, and guardian of the Bucentaur, and Phillipo Calendaro, a seaman of much skill and repute. Both these conspirators, with a cruel precaution, were gagged previously to being ignominously hung.

Leaving the dismayed citizens to gaze upon the unexpected and hideous scene before them, return we to Giacinto Paoli on the 18th of April, 1355, the day following the execution of the conspirators. The door of his prison, on that morning, was thrown open, and two of his usual jailers entered the cell, followed by a masked personage carrying a large mantle and mask, which the Corsican was requested to put on, and follow his guides.

"One request, Signor Paoli," observed his conductor, as they prepared to quit the cell. "If you value your liberty or life, preserve a strict silence—no matter what you either see or hear. If you follow this advice, in two days you will regain your liberty. Failure in

doing so, will lead to imprisonment perhaps for life."

The speaker was evidently one of a higher station than those who accompanied him—Paoli, therefore, considered this warning was given either by a friend or by the order of one; for hitherto no word of any kind had passed between him and his jailers or guides.

After traversing innumerable passages, sometimes but dimly lighted by a single lamp at long intervals—at others, led by his guides through a labyrinth of dark passages, they, at length, began to mount a long flight of stone stairs.

As they ascended, Paoli thought the sound of human voices reached his ear; and in a few moments he became convinced that the confused hum of many tongues was audible. Having reached the summit of the stairs, and passed along a dark corridor, they stopped before a folding door.

Paoli felt his arm grasped as a voice whispered in his ear—

"Beware! be silent!"

The next instant, he was gently impelled through the door, and at once stood transfixed with horror at the scene before him, for the mask, though it concealed his features, did not obstruct his sight. At first, he was dazzled by the glorious light of day. But that passed off, and he gazed anxiously around. He first perceived that he was standing in a row of about twenty figures, habited and masked in exactly the same manner as himself. In fact, except for his towering statue, no distinction could be made between him and other individuals of the group. At a glance, Paoli saw that he was on one side of the platform on the summit of the great staircase leading into the Ducal Palace, styled the Giant's Stairs. The great folding-doors were closed; but the murmur of countless voices from without came distinctly upon the ear. Before him was a sight, that chilled

his blood, as his eyes rested upon its principal features. It was a scene that impressed itself upon his memory with a startling vividness—one that was never forgotten in after life. In the middle of the great platform of the Giant's Stairs, was a block covered with crimson cloth; beside it, stood a figure there was no mistaking; it was the headsman of San Marco, leaning with his bare and brawny arms upon a long-handled and highly-polished axe. As usual, with all the myrmidons of the secret tribunals of Venice, his features were concealed by a mask. Near the block, stood a venerable Friar, holding a crucifix, and, at his feet, knelt a human being. Upon a bench, covered with crimson cloth, sat ten Signors, wrapped in crimson mantles, and masked. These were the ten rulers of Venice.

As Paoli gazed, scarcely breathing, the kneeling figure arose; and, standing erect, presented to the astonished and horror-stricken gaze of the Corsican, the noble, but pale

features of the Doge of Venice, Marino Faliero.

"Merciful God, can this be possible?" thought Paoli, as he shudderingly beheld the noble old man advance with a firm step towards the executioner. He that in his youth had carried the banner of the Lion in proud triumph over sea and land, knelt and laid his venerable head upon the block. The Priest staggered forward, and held the crucifix to his lips, extending his hands over the white locks of the noble victim.

A signal was given, and the next instant Marino Faliero slept with his fathers.

"Throw open the great gates!" exclaimed the stern voice of a senator.

This being done, a mighty multitude, with hoarse murmurs, filled the hall. The body-guards of the Republic, in their gorgeous armour, kept back the mob, as one of the Ten, commanded the executioner to hold out the gory head, while, casting aside his mask,

he advanced to the edge of the platform, ejaculating—

"Venetians, justice has been executed upon a great offender."*

A profound and awful stillness for a moment pervaded the vast assemblage. The next, a wild and triumphant shout burst from the lips of a fickle populace—from the same base throats that but twelve months before, and on the self-same spot, had greeted that gory head as their lord and master.

Shocked, disgusted, and sick at heart, Paoli felt his arm seized, and having been conducted through the same door, without exchanging a single word with his conductors, he again found himself the solitary inmate of his prison cell.

Two days after, he again was led into the chamber where his first examination took

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* Historical—Lanuto.

place. Only three persons occupied the room. Contrary to his expectation, all three unmasked, but their features were totally unknown to him.

"Signor Paoli," began one of the Signors, "I am happy to inform you that in less than an hour you will quit these halls, and be restored to liberty. You have been accused of a State crime. Before now, such an accusation has cost a life. You have been declared free from all participation in the crimes laid to your charge. Nevertheless, we cannot hold you altogether free from error. It is therefore considered necessary, for State reasons, that you should be banished the City of Venice for a period of three years. Let it be understood, Signor, that should you be found within the City or Lagune, your life is forfeited to the State."

Paoli felt his cheek flush, but he uttered not a word.

Though banished from Venice," continued

the Venetian, "you are still at liberty to serve under her banner; and all her dependencies and colonies are open to you. It is understood that you wish to serve under the Republic. Do so with the courage and integrity you have hitherto manifested; and you will find that if Venetian rulers can punish, they can also reward. You will be landed on the opposite shores of the Lagune. The Fleet of Admiral Pisani lies off Ravenna, waiting final orders. The galley of the Marchese Tiepolo is with the Fleet. You can join her there. I need not, therefore, Signor Paoli, say more, nor remind you, that any infringement of the sentence pronounced against you will be your ruin."

At a signal from the Venetian, Paoli was led from the chamber, immersed in profound and painful thought. Without heeding the tortuous paths through which he followed his guides, he came at length to the brink of a dark and narrow canal, on whose sluggish waters lay a long and hearse-like gondola.

Two figures, muffled and masked, sat under the canopy of the boat; while six oarsmen, with the badges of the Republic on their arms reclined on the benches.

Paoli was requested to take his seat beside the two silent figures; the black drapery was then drawn closely down, and the gondola moved slowly through the canal. Presently, the light of day came faintly—then stronger and stronger; and Paoli became conscious that they were moving through one of the frequented canals of Venice. He heard the splash of oars, the songs of the gondoliers, and the murmur of many voices, as they passed and repassed the countless barks navigating the water-streets of Venice.

During the two hours that the voyage lasted, not a word was spoken by those within the gondola. At the end of that period, the keel of the boat grated upon a shingly beach.

One of the masked signors now motioned to

Paoli to follow him, and, leaving the gondola, they leaped upon the strand. Wrapped in a deep reverie, the Corsican scarcely heeded the masked personage that followed his steps, as he ascended the somewhat steep bank where the boat touched the beach.

Having reached the summit, he paused and looked back over the scarcely-rippling waters of the broad Lagune that lay sparkling in the sun's rays between him and lordly Venice.

"Yes," soliloquised Paoli, as he gazed—unconscious of the presence of the masked figure that still stood within a few steps of where he paused—"Yes," and he spoke half aloud, "thou art fair and lovely to look at; but gorgeous and magnificent as thou art, and styled Queen of the Adriatic, I would rather, now I know thee, have no canopy but that which at this moment covers me, than breathe the polluted air that sighs through thy gilded chambers."

"Speak not so harshly of my native city, Giacinto," said a voice behind him.

Turning round with a start of joyful surprise, he beheld Count Steno by his side. The friends grasped each other's hands with fervour, while Steno led Paoli beneath the shelter of a low fence.

"Here we are, removed from observation. My time is short, and I have much to say."

Seating themselves upon the ruins of some former temple, Count Steno resumed—

"You have had, *amico mio*, a painful trial of our Venetian rulers, and been somehow most strangely mixed up, though perfectly innocent, in one of the vilest plots that ever entered the human mind."

"But, surely—for my brain is bewildered with what I have seen—surely," exclaimed Paoli, "your venerable Doge could have no part in this plot. Merciful Heaven! even were he guilty, could not his station—his grey

hairs—and, above all, his former glory, save him from so ignoble a death?"

"Not with the rulers of Venice," returned Steno. "No; his crime was no less than the overturning the state, and the massacre of the entire nobility. But time passes. I must not loiter, or even I may be made to feel the rod." And Steno smiled somewhat bitbitterly. "Listen to me, Giacinto. Harbour no feeling of hostility to Venice for what you have suffered. As to the banishment, it is nothing; nearly half the time specified will expire before this expedition can be accomplished The first brilliant action you perform, will assuredly cause the revocation of your sentence. Besides, believe me you are about the only individual accused of a state crime, innocent or guilty, that ever left the dungeons of St. Mark without being put to the question."

"For that I may thank you," replied Paoli.

"Nay, Paoli, you had powerful friends

beside Michaello Steno. I first heard of your arrest from Juliano, who most wisely, being an expert diver and swimmer, swam aboard a fishing-boat, and then, without a moment's loss of time, found me out. I managed to get you confined where you were; otherwise, you would have been put under the leads; and this being near summer, you would have stood a good chance of being roasted. I next applied to the Marchese Spolino, with whose daughter, Bianca, you are a special favourite And, to tell you the truth, when you were struck by the assassin at the Ducal Palace, I thought it was a friendly warning from some lover of hers.

"As a member of the Council of Forty, I soon learned that you were accused of being a spy; and I ascertained that the accusation came through that accursed channel, the lion's mouth. But to my astonishment, I soon found that you stood in a much more dangerous predicament. Your papers were seized;

and, to my utter amazement, I learned that a most frightful plot had that day been discovered by Beltramo de Bergamo, as one of the conspirators he betrayed the whole affair, names of the chief plotters, &c., to the Lioni, his patron, in order to save his life.

"Beltramo was secured. Amongst numerous persons seized was a squire of Duke Guarnieri; for you must know that the unfortunate Marino Faliero was in secret treaty with this quondam friend of yours; and actually had a conference with him in the Ducal Palace the night of the masked ball."

"It was my declining to communicate my knowledge of that meeting," said Paoli, "that was near leading me to the torture which I should undoubtedly have undergone but for the opportune arrival of the Marchese Gradinegro."

"Yes," continued Steno, "and it was your keeping the occurrence of that night from my knowledge, that led to your being arrested.

But of one thing you are ignorant. The inquisitor who examined you was as bitter a rival of yours as the unfortunate Bertucci Faliero. You were examined a whole hour before the appointed time; for the Marchese intended being present at your examination without your being aware of it; the preference shewn you by the Lady Paulina raised up against you two powerful and vindictive enemies. Bertucci Faliero was one; the other's name must remain untold. Several of the persons seized were put to the torture. Guarnieri's squire broke down at once, and confessed his master's having passed forty-eight hours in Venice. I was present; and suspecting that your friend, the Duke, was the party who had accused you of being a spy, I examined the prisoner; but he very stoutly denied all knowledge of the letters. An extra turn of the wheel, however, altered his confession; and you were cleared. There still remained the three letters found amongst your papers.

Bertucci Faliero had undergone the torture, and confessed his share of the plot to massacre the nobility; but, of course, was not suspected of having anything to do with you. No mention was made of your name. Remorse and a knowledge that his fate was past hope, caused him to accuse himself, when brought up to condemn you, by swearing to his knowledge of the letters being written to you. However, for State reasons I must say no more upon that subject. Had we not arrived as we did, you certainly would have played the devil amongst the Familiars of St. Mark; and assuredly to this outbreak of passion you owe your three years of banishment—a very trifling punishment to you, my dear Giacinto, whatever it might be to a Venetian wedded to the pleasures of Venice. The intense anxiety of the good Marchese Tiepolo, and the ladies Julia and Paulina — ah! my friend, how is it," added Steno, in a tone of much feeling, "how is it you can have been so blind, or so indifferent,

to the smiles of one of the fairest and sweetest of the daughters of Venice?"

Paoli bent his head in mental abstraction: he pressed the hand of his friend; but did not trust his voice to speak. Could he have returned that night to Venice, he would have thrown himself at the feet of Paulina, and supplicated for that love which he had so heedlessly cast away. But it was not to be. Though disappointed in the first love of her young heart, Paulina was yet to love, and be beloved, and to give birth to a long line of a princely race.

There was a silence of some moments between the young men, each employed with his own thoughts. At length, Steno spoke saying—

"We must part, Giacinto. Three years in our youth is nothing. If we are spared, we shall meet, please God, in better and happier times. Here is a long letter from the Marchese; and this," holding forth a well remembered jewel, "is a token of Paulina's friendship.

Julia sends this also, with her sincere wish for your prosperity and happiness."

Paoli received the gifts with a sigh of deep regret. He looked at the costly jewel of the fair Venetian till his eyes grew moist, and his heart beat with a quicker pulsation.

The Count beheld his friend's emotion.

"You may roam the world, Giacinto," said Steno, pressing the Corsican's hand, and looking fixedly in his face, "you may sip from the cup of pleasure; but no where will you find truer hearts than in the place you leave behind you. Look," pointing to a thick cluster of trees about a mile from where they stood, "behind yon coppice you will find your squire, Pulini, your mails, and two stout steeds to convey you to Ravenna. Everything has been thought of and provided by the Marchese on board the galley. You will be well received by Pisani the Admiral; and his son longs for your arrival. You will soon distinguish yourself; for the Dalmatian coast is lined, I am told, with the

war galleys of Genoa. And now, God bless you, dear friend !"

The gay, thoughtless, volatile Count Steno, was deeply affected. The friends embraced. They looked in each other's features, as if to treasure the remembrance; and with many warm and grateful remembrances from Giacinto to the Marchese, Marchesa and family, Michaello Steno, and Paoli parted.

CHAPTER XIII.

AGNES ALVIANO.

We must now request our readers to step with us across the wide space of sea and shore, and permit us to land them in the middle of the Byzantium of the Greeks; then very different indeed from the far-famed Stamboul of the Turks. The mansion of the Venetian Merchant, Bartolomeo Alviano, though its front looked into one of the best streets of the city, the rear of the mansion and the part inhabited by the family of the wealthy mer-

chant, commanded a view of one of the loveliest scenes the human eye could wish to rest upon.

Standing upon the veranda, that stretched along the centre length of the mansion, the gaze, after passing a rather extensive and tastefully arranged garden, and some low houses and warehouses bordering the waters of the harbor, roamed over that lovely lake, with its beautifully sloping hills, rich in vegetation, in groves, and studded witth countless mansions, erected in the purest taste of Grecian architecture. The glorious waters of the Bosphorus next came in view, studded with countless picturesque crafts of the middle ages, such as the Carrick, with its ponderous and towering masts, the gorgeous galleys of the Emperor, with their silken streamers, and flags flaunting in the breeze, and the singular, but picturesque, barks of the Thracian fishermen. Skimming the surface of the water like birds, were hundreds of latines of various forms from the Islands, mingling with the long and sharp

war galleys of the Florentines and Venetians. The singular and diversified costumes of sailors of the many nations and tribes, frequenting the waters of the Bosphorus, gave additional animation to the prospect; and the mariners' songs—for many of the wild boatmen of Scutari, and the sailors from the Black Sea, sang their rude, but still pleasing, national ditties, as they plied the oar, or set their lofty sails—ascended, at times, clear and distinct to the ear of those who either walked or reposed beneath the shade of the veranda. Numerous beautiful and rare plants stood in handsome vases in different parts of this balcony; many climbed and spread their luxuriant blossoms over the trellis work of the pillars, and shed a rich perfume.

It was in the month of September, of the same year in which the ill-fated Doge of Venice lost his throne and life. The great heat of the climate was then tempered by fine breezes from the sea; and though the sky

was cloudless, the rays of the evening sun could be borne without suffering inconvenience.

Seated at the open windows of a magnificent saloon, looking into the balcony just described, were two ladies; the younger employed in reading; the elder in embroidering some fancy ornaments.

The elder lady, though about forty years of age, was still very handsome, and graceful in person. She was the Signora Tolmeo, widow of a Venetian merchant, who had been engaged in commerce in the then small town and port of Livorno. The Signor was distantly connected with the old cavalero, Tolosino, whom we encountered in the early chapters of this volume, as the guardian of the young Agnes Alviano.

The Signora Tolmeo had lost her husband by the great pestilence, as it was styled, and unfortunately, at a period of great embarrassment. The Cavalero Tolosino, immediately offered her

an asylum; for, during the few weeks that Agnes had passed at her Castle, both ladies became attached to each other, and when Agnes was embarking for Byzantium, she implored the Signora Tolmeo to accompany her and reside with her for the future.

Having no family, or home, and few connections, the widow, who had learned to love the gentle girl with a mother's affection, willingly consented.

And a great happiness it proved to both parties. The Signor Alviano received, with the greatest kindness, the companion his daughter had selected; appointed her a suite of apartments; and soon found that a most pleasing addition had been made to his family.

At this period Agnes Alviano had reached her eighteenth year. If she had been accounted lovely and fascinating as a girl springing into womanhood, how much more captivating and beautiful was she at the period we now present her to our readers.

Above the general standard of the sex, her fine and graceful figure derived an air of conscious dignity, from the purity and beauty of her mind. Her hair of glossy blackness, corresponded with brilliant eyes of the same dark hue; and the finely-arched and pencilled eyebrows, upon a forehead exquisitely fair, left the beholder nothing to wish. In mind, temper, and disposition, Agnes Alviano was all the fondest parent could wish or pray for; and the worthy Signor Alviano's whole heart and soul was wrapped up in the love of his only and lovely daughter.

Before the outbreak between Venice and Genoa, many of the nobility of the two rival Republics, visited at the hospitable mansion of the wealthy merchant. Many Venetian families of consideration dwelt in Byzantium. And, in the adjoining colony of Pera, a Genoese settlement, were residing some of the highest Genoese nobility.

The Court of the Emperor Palœsgus, though fearfully reduced in power and magnificence,

was still, though near its final extinction, a gay and splendid one.

If Paulina was the reigning beauty of the Venetian aristocracy, Agnes Alviano the heiress of the wealthy merchant, was the boast of the European maidens of Byzantium. Many a Venetian youth, strove to gain her affections, but we cannot look into that wonderful mystery —a woman's heart; for though many a suitor could boast, a handsome person, a proud name, and knightly deeds—the maiden's heart, in September, 1355, was still apparently unconquered.

"*Cara Mia*," exclaimed the Signora Tolmeo, looking up from her embroidery, and perceiving that the fair Agnes, sat with her book upon her knee—while her gaze was fixed as if on vacancy, "*Cara Mia*, you are in the clouds."

Agnes smiled, saying, "In truth I was, in fancy, far from Byzantium. I suppose my father's intention of quitting this imperial

city, has sent my mind rambling back to Venice. I was just then," continued the maiden, "thinking of my cousins, especially of Paulina."

"And, interrupted the Signora," of this new lover of hers, who, report declares will speedily scatter his Venetian rivals, from their dreams. Did not the young Count Morisini say their marriage was to take place the same day the Lady Julia gives her hand to Count Steno?"

"Something of the kind he certainly said," replied Agnes thoughtfully. "Still Paulina, in her letters, brought by the Count now nearly seven months ago, mentions nothing of the sort; but merely describes this Corsican Knight as one of the finest specimens of the *preux chevalier* she ever beheld. How very strange *carissima*, that Paulina's lover, if lover he be, and my gallant deliverer should be one and the same person (for it is not very likely that two individuals with one appellation

should be rambling over Italy in search of adventures) and that he should, for a time, be a resident in the palace of my uncle. The Marchese, Paulina says, is as much attached to him as to a favourite son."

"Did he not mention to the Cavalero Tolosino," inquired the Signora, "where he was going when he so opportunely released you from the hands of that German robber?"

"In truth," replied Agnes, "but little time was allowed for conversation. My guardian was extremely anxious to get as far away from the scene of our disaster as possible. The Knight merely said, his name was Giacinto Paoli, a Corsican exile, and that he was proceeding to Florence. I cannot think how it is," continued Agnes, "that no vessel from Venice has reached this port. It is now more than six months since we received those letters by the Count Alberto Morisini."

"Is there not a report that the mouth of

the Adriatic is blocked by a powerful Genoese fleet under Admiral Doria? If so, that easily accounts for no intelligence from Venice," remarked the Signora. "Indeed your father fears a long and tedious contest in those seas; and that reason, combined with some others, has induced him to wind up his mercantile affairs in this part of the world."

As the Signora spoke, the door opened, and the Signor Alviano entered the chamber holding a large packet of letters, opened and unopened. The Signor Alviano was then in his fifty-sixth year, and looked even younger. He was of middle height, and somewhat robust; but his countenance was attractive in the highest degree, impressing the beholder with a full conviction of the merchant's benignant and truly generous disposition.

"Well, here is news at last," exclaimed he, as he seated himself by his daughter after pressing a kiss, as he usually did, on her fair and open brow. "But sorry am I to say,"

and he spoke with much feeling, "we have dismal news enough in all conscience."

"Nothing has happened?" questioned Agnes, looking anxiously at her father as he sorted his letters.

"Nothing, nothing, my dear girl," replied the Merchant, "to any of our kith and kin. There, there are three letters for you, my love, from your cousins. There has been sad doings in Venice; and, strange to say, this Corsican Knight, the young Count Paoli—for Count he is, and his father before him, and no nobler name in Corsica, than Paoli—before the first invasion of that Island—"

"But, dear father," interrupted Agnes, "you forget. And, in truth," she added, smiling, and laying her taper fingers on his, "whenever Corsica is mentioned, everything passes into oblivion, except that little speck on the wide ocean."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the Signor

Alviano; "little speck do you call it? As fine and high-spirited a race—"

"Yes, yes, father, granted. I have, you know, seen a specimen; and, I confess, if they at all resemble him, they are not amiss. But let us know about this dismal news, and the Signor Paoli."

"Ha, there it is," exclaimed the Merchant, looking somewhat archly in his daughter's face. "By St. Mark, this wandering Knight somehow occupies as much of your thoughts as his country, I confess, does of mine. Some day or other I will tell you why."

Had the Signora Tolmeo looked at the maiden as her father uttered the last sentence, she would have greatly admired the brilliant color of her cheeks and temples.

"I have a considerable budget of news for you," resumed the Merchant, "some of which will astonish you not a little. These letters came in a Venetian carrick, which left Venice

after the fleet of Pisani had sailed to meet the Genoese galleys which were cruizing off the coast of Dalmatia. Her captain saw the two fleets approach each other; but a tremendous gale separated them. During the storm, he succeeded in escaping the enemy. He has a valuable cargo, consigned to me from the Marchese Tiepolo—the last which a Venetian noble will ever embark. This I will explain another time—it is a new law. The sad news I have to relate is the miserable fate of the conqueror of Zara. The noble, but ill-fated, Marino Faliero, who being discovered as the originator of a fearful plot to massacre the entire nobility of Venice was beheaded by order of the Council of Ten."

"Merciful Providence, how horrid!" exclaimed both ladies. "A Doge of Venice—an old man of eighty—brought to the block!"

"Neither a great name, mighty deeds, nor

venerable age, weigh as anything in the scales of Venetian justice, when opposed to the slightest treason to the state," replied the Merchant. "But the most extraordinary part of the intelligence I have received in my letters from the Marchese Tiepolo, is, that the Signor Paoli was actually arrested and thrown into a dungeon, by order of the council, on a charge of being a treasonable spy. He was examined, and though finally declared innocent, was sentenced to three years' banishment from the Dogano—which means the city of Venice and its three islands. The Marchese tells me that the story is too long and too intricate to be now detailed in all its particulars."

Agnes looked at her father with a perplexed gaze. Her eyes sparkled, and her colour heightened, as she said—

"You deal in riddles, dear father. What on earth can induce the Signor Paoli to wander into this part of the world?"

"The Marchese Tiepolo," returned the Signor Alviano, "fitted out a magnificent galley for this war, and gave the command of her to Paoli. Although banished from Venice, he may reside in, or visit any, of the colonies; and the State also granted him the required document, permitting him to hold any command under the banner of St. Mark. We may now daily expect the Venetian fleet in our waters; and, in truth, it is time; for so audacious have the Genoese colonists of Pera become, and so miserably weak and pusillanimous is the Greek government, that there is no knowing how far their insolence might extend if not kept in check by a stronger force than the Emperor can command. And now I must leave you, my child, to peruse your own letters; and I have little doubt that you will find much more news and more minute particulars of all that has taken place,

than my worthy friend the Marchese has given me."

So saying, the Merchant Alviano retired to his counting-house.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MERCHANT.

PAULINA TIEPOLO did in truth write fully and clearly to a cousin she loved as dearly as a cherished sister. Neither hesitation nor mystery—envy nor jealousy was in the noble heart of the Venetian maiden. She gave Agnes a full account of the late unhappy events in Venice—spoke of Paoli, with a warm and delicate feeling—confessed her heart had been in considerable danger, and was only saved by a chance circumstance which had revealed

the Corsican's meeting with Agnes. Paulina declared it was her firm belief that Giacinto's iron heart was only to be won by her cousin; and ended a very long letter, (especially for that un-letter-writing age), by solemnly saying, that if she (Agnes) had a heart she could call her own, to exchange it fearlessly with the one she felt convinced the Knight was most anxious to lay at her feet.

To say that Agnes neither blushed, nor that her heart did not quicken its pulsation during the reading of Paulina's letter, would, I fear, be false. We write of a most romantic age. Nevertheless, we do not mean that Agnes had actually fallen in love with the Corsican Knight at the period of their meeting in the val d'Arno; but his gallantry and courage—his youthful features and magnificent form were often before her mind's eye; and, as none of the young nobility of Venice, who frequented her father's mansion, in any way equalled her

deliverer in person, manner, or features, she continued mistress of her own heart up to the arrival of her cousin Paulina's letter. Besides, although nearly two years had elapsed since her adventure with Ludovico Guarnieri, the remembrance of that moment of peril was constantly kept alive in her mind by her father, who was perpetually talking of the Paoli family, of Corsica, and its struggles for freedom with the Genoese. Though surprised at her father's sudden predilection—for so she considered it—for everything Corsican, the maiden very willingly listened, wondering how a Venetian had become acquainted with the history of so remote an Island with which the Venetians had no manner of commercial dealings.

The Signor Alviano often declared he would willingly give a third of his wealth to be able to thank the preserver of his beloved daughter in person.

From the period of the arrival of the letters from Venice, the worthy Merchant was in a state of perpetual movement and bustle. His anxiety for the arrival of the fleet, and his ardent desire to behold the Signor Paoli, kept him in daily journeys from the Faro to the Arsenal to make inquiries. From the former place, a great extent of the sea of Marmora was visible; and the approach of Pisani's fleet, which was anxiously looked for, would be descried from the lofty Faro many hours before its arrival opposite Byzantium.

On the 25th of September, 1655, the Venetian fleet, under Admiral Pisani, entered the Propontis. The galley of Paoli had proved one of the fastest in the fleet; and during the five months cruizing along the Dalmatian shores, and in the eastern seas, he had already highly distinguished himself, and procured the favor and protection of the Admiral, fighting and capturing two fine and richly-laden galleys off the island of Brioni, when separated

from the fleet during the great storm that prevented the meeting of the hostile fleets. In rejoining the galleys of Pisani, he had also rendered a signal service to the Admiral, and saved his galley and five others from being wrecked upon an unsuspected reef, during a heavy gale. The pilot of the Corsican's galley, knew the reef, and the only passage through it, and, boldly carrying a press of canvas, he passed the Admiral's galley—which being too disabled by the gale to avoid the danger—took the lead, at the same time hoisting signals to follow his galley as the passage was known to his pilot. Paoli steered through the boiling surges with skill and coolness; the Admiral, and five of the largest war galleys followed in safety. At Mitylene, where they afterwards anchored, Paoli publicly received the thanks of the Admiral, and the pilot received a substantial reward.

It was with feelings of excitement and pleasure that Paoli entered the sea of Marmora,

and rapidly approached Byzantium. With a favorable breeze they soon brought in view the heights of Scutari, and the seven hills on which Byzantium stood, with its four hundred and seventy-eight towers which then, in a circuit of nearly eighteen miles, studded the long terrace of her walls. Soon the eye could trace the gentle curve of the Chrysoceras, or Golden Horn, an arm of the Propontis which forms the port of the city, and bathes the north-western side of the unequal triangle on which the city stands. The Acropolis, as the apex of this triangle was called, is, at the present day, covered with the glittering buildings and gardens of the Seraglio. Opposite, is Scutari, and there begins the mouth of the Thracian Bosphorus. From the fortress of Galata to the spot now known as the Seraglio point, at the period of our tale, a distance of more than five hundred yards, a massive double chain stretched across and guarded the entrance of the harbour.

Struck with the magnificence and imposing appearance of all around him, Paoli followed the Admiral; and, shortly after, the galleys dropped anchor under the protecting ramparts of Byzantium.

Scarcely had Paoli moored his galley, before he perceived a very fine eight-oared barge, with a crimson awning push from the side of the Admiral's galley, and pull towards his vessel. The curtains of the canopy were drawn up; and Paoli, as it rapidly approached, beheld a Signor seated beneath the awning. He was alone. In a few moments, the barge shot along-side; and Paoli, seeing that it was the wish of the stranger to come on broad, ordered the side ladders to be lowered. Another moment, and the Signor Alviano stood upon the deck of "The Lion;" and scarcely taking time to introduce himself, so eager and excited was his manner, he seized the hand of the Knight, who no sooner heard his name, than

almost equally excited, he led the merchant, who all the time was heartily shaking his hand and welcoming him to Byzantium, into the handsome cabin of the galley.

"This is positively the happiest moment I have enjoyed since my child returned to her father's arms after many years' absence, Signor Paoli," exclaimed tho worthy merchant, looking at the same time with visible admiration at the glowing features and stalwart frame of the Corsican. "I little expected," continued he, "a few weeks back ever to have the pleasure of embracing and thanking the deliverer of my only child."

"And verily, Signor Alviano," returned Paoli, "I little thought, some months back, when a prisoner in the dungeons of St. Mark, ever to see the glorious light of day, much less to have the pleasure of pressing the hand of the father of the fair maiden to whom it was my good fortune to offer assistance."

At this moment, Paoli's squire entered the

cabin to say that the barge of the Admiral's son, with the young Count Pisani himself, was steering for The Lion. As Pulini spoke, the merchant turned round, and the squire's gaze falling on his features, he started back, with a look of extreme astonishment, while the merchant himself changed colour slightly, but immediately resumed his usual look. Paoli did not perceive the strange manner or action of his squire; for at the moment he had turned to look through the stern windows of the galley to ascertain if the Count Pisani was coming on board.

"Will you excuse me a moment, Signor Alviano?" said Paoli. "I see my friend Pisani is approaching."

"I know the young man well," replied the merchant. "When he was but a boy, I have frequently admired his spirit and courage. On his first visit here long ago, he was a favorite guest at my mansion. Agnes had not then returned from Venice, and he used to flatter

me by saying my little girl would, in time, become the flower of Venetian maidens."

A thought crossed the mind of the Corsican at that moment, but he chased it away, for it was not a pleasing one; and, followed by the Signor Alviano, he ascended to receive the Count, who had already reached the deck. After pressing Paoli's hand, the young Pisani took the offered palm of the worthy merchant, saying, with a smile—

"Ah, Signor Alviano, you have found the elixir of life. By St. Mark, time is as nought. You look younger than ever; though now—let me see—by all that's lovely, and that's your fair daughter Agnes, it's ten years since we met."

"As lively as ever, Count," said the merchant; "but the said ten years have changed the slight strippling into a very proper man."

"*Santa Madonna!* I trust you do not flatter," exclaimed Pisani, laughing. "And most devoutly do I hope the fair maidens of

this city may think the same. But tell me, Giacinto, what think you of all you see? Here we are at last; and I trust we may enjoy ourselves a little after five months' monotonous cruizing; though, by the by, you had the luck to break its stupidity by some sharp blows with the enemy. I bring you permission from the Admiral to spend a few days—only a few days, I am sorry to say—ashore."

"And during those few days," interposed the merchant, "I insist upon both of you becoming my guests."

"With all my heart, with all my heart, Signor Alviano," exclaimed Pisani. "I long to see your fair daughter, and to have a little chat over the past. Perhaps she has totally sunk all remembrance of poor Venice by contrasting its sombre canals and calm Lagune with the gorgeous scenery of this fairy land."

Three months passed over on the rapid wings of time. Let us see what effect that short

space of life had upon the fortunes of our hero. It is, in truth, a very brief space; and yet a kingdom and a monarchy have fallen in that short interval, after a dynasty of five hundred years. To Paoli, that period altered the destiny of his life. He had vowed to devote to the fair Agnes his future existence; and it must be confessed she most willingly accepted the vow. The merchant Alviano felt infinitely greater delight in hearing his blushing daughter confess that she had bestowed her heart upon a fortuneless exile, than if she had pledged it to the noblest in Venice.

"There was one, however, who beheld the fast-growing love of the fair Agnes, with a disturbed eye—and that was Giovanni Pisani, the nephew of the Admiral. Noble, generous, and chivalric—of a fine person, handsome features, and highly descended, he had even when a mere youth, and he visited at the Palace Tiepolo, beheld the growing beauty of

Agnes with admiration and youthful love. But now, when he saw her in all the pride and grace of full-grown womanhood—every charm increased and perfected, Pisani, without a thought, but that he should succeed, allowed his heart to feast upon the loveliness that was never destined to be his.

Before the three months had expired, though he knew not that the tale of love was told and heard, and listened to with heaving bosom and beating heart, yet he had seen enough to satisfy him, that, in the Corsican Exile—the soldier, with his sword for his sole inheritance —he had a most dangerous rival.

To a noble and generous spirit like that of Pisani, perhaps our readers may think, however painful the trial might be, the prize he so thirsted for would be abandoned to his more fortunate rival. Alas! young love is a sad tyrant, and sorely tries even the noblest heart. Pisani's manner insensibly changed towards Paoli, who, too absorbed in the charm that

bound him, when in the presence of Agnes, perceived it not.

During the three months much had taken place besides the exchange of two young hearts. Admiral Pisani had succeeded in persuading the Greek Emperor to espouse the cause of the Venetians against their mutual foe, the Genoese. But such was the miserable and fallen state of the once mighty Empire, that the utmost the Emperor could do, was to promise to equip and fully furnish eight galleys to join the fleet of Pisani. Being now satisfied at having gained the object of his visit to Byzantium, the Admiral sailed for the winter quarters of his fleet, leaving the younger Pisani, and Paoli, and the crews of two Venetian galleys—to assist in the equipment and fitting-out of the Emperor's galleys; as also to keep the Genoese colony of Pera in check, and to give notice of the movements of the enemy in that quarter. Thus Paoli, in a

certain measure, remained under the command of the younger Pisani.

Paoli now found but little time to spend in the society of his betrothed, for such she was; though, for several reasons, their mutual engagement, was not openly declared. Pisani required the presence of Giacinto every hour of the day in the Arsenal; for the Greeks are proverbially slow, and indolent, and need constant watching. In fact, everything was yet to be done to the unfinished galleys of the Emperor.

Still an hour or so of the evenings were always spent in the company of the merchant's family. The Signor Alviano was very busily engaged in winding up his mercantile affairs, —as he resolved to quit Byzantium, at all events, the following spring. Paoli, until the termination of the war, could not think for a moment of giving up the command of his galley, and the Sgnor Alviano, would find it

absolutely necessary to return to Venice, to settle his commercial transactions with the Marchese Tiepolo. Now, as the Corsican was banished that City for three years, the merchant purposed, as soon as possible, to leave Venice, and return for a time to Florence.

Such were the intentions of the merchant, in hastily thinking over the subject ; but no definite plan could be adopted in the present posture of public affairs at Venice, which appeared to be on the eve of a long war.

One evening, when our hero sat listening to the fine voice of Agnes, who accompanied herself on the harp. The Signora Tolmeo being as usual, busy with her embroidery, Giovanni Pisani entered the room. Had any of the parties present paid attention to the Venetian's countenance, they would have perceived a sad change pass over his truly handsome features ;

his brows were knit, and his eyes flashed as he beheld the position of the lovers; and, scarcely returning the kind salutation of the party, he threw himself upon an ottoman, without a word, and his strange silence and manner attracted the observation of all. To one of Paoli's kind inquiries, the young count said he was heated, having dined that day with some of the Chief Officers of the Emperor's body guard. After a pause, during, which Agnes laid aside her harp, looking at Pisani, with rather a disturbed and anxious look, the latter said, with an effort to recover his usual manner and tone—

"I am sorry, Paoli, to interrupt the delightful mode in which I see you pass your evenings; but we must not neglect our duty to the republic nevertheless."

"I trust, Pisani," returned the Corsican, "that, although only a volunteer in the service of the state, my duty has never been neglected."

Agnes turned slightly pale, for the tone of Paoli was cold and haughty.

"I say nothing about neglect on your part, Paoli," rejoined Pisani, with a look at Agnes; "but the fact is, I received, yesterday, important dispatches from the Emperor, for the Venetian Admiral, which must reach him as soon as possible. You are aware that this morning the Genoese garrison of Pera have again insulted the Emperor."

"Yes," replied Paoli, quietly, "I heard that a large piece of rock was discharged from one of their balistic engines, into one of the Greek Carricks, and that the pusillanimous Greeks were in great consternation."

"Ah," said Pisani, "you heard this much; but perhaps you did *not* hear that on the Emperor demanding the reason of such an outrage, during the short cessation of hostilities—which, by-the-by, expires ofter to-morrow—the Genoese Commander very coolly

replied they were rejoiced to find the city was within range of their machines."

"A pretty pass," returned Paoli, "the Roman Empire is coming to, to be thus insulted by the insignificant colony of a far distant Republic."

"Ah, well, we have only to look to the consequence as it regards the interest of Venice," pursued Pisani. "For my own part, I am sorry," and he looked very markedly at Agnes, "I am sorry to be obliged to deprive the ladies of your very agreeable society; for I fear you must sail after to-morrow for Negropont, where the Admiral is; for it is very certain his fleet will have to leave their snug quarters before the spring commences. It is also reported by a barque from Mitylene that numerous cruizers from the Genoese fleet have been seen off the entrance of the sea of Marmora. But your galley is a very fast one; and, in truth, somehow, better officered and manned than any in the fleet."

"Will there not be considerable risk," asked the merchant's daughter, with a slight tremor of voice; "in a single galley, at this time of the year, running through the straits while the mouth is blocked by Genoese cruizers?"

"Well I confess," replied Pisani, in rather a sneering tone, "to the Signor Paoli there will be somewhat more danger than to another, as I believe the Genoese have placed a very high value on his head should he be recognized, if captured——"

"No fear of that, fair Agnes," interrupted Paoli, rising, and speaking cheerfully and calmly. Then, taking the maiden's hand, he added, "the more danger, the more glory; and I fully expect to return to thank the lovely owner of this fair hand for her interest in the poor exile's fate:"

Respectfully kissing the hand he held, he quitted the chamber without taking the slightest notice of Pisani.

The Count looked after the majestic figure of the Corsican, biting his lip, as if in bitterness of thought. When he turned round, he perceived that the merchant's daughter had withdrawn by another door.

With a slight frown on his brow, he bowed to the Signora Tolmeo, and followed the knight to the arsenal.

CHAPTER XV.

THE VOYAGE.

With the first glimmering of dawn, Paoli left the port of Byzantium, and with a favorable breeze stood out into the sea of Marmora.

In his own mind, he felt satisfied that his then voyage might have been dispensed with, and that it was merely a ruse of the younger Pisani to get him out of the way in order to urge his own suit with the gentle Agnes. The knight, feeling neither annoyed nor uneasy, and having perfect confidence in the truth of

his fair betrothed, and in her father's unflinching honor, sailed for Negropont with the determination, if fortune should favour him, of achieving some exploit worthy of the fine craft he commanded, and the gallant crew with which she was manned. With a fair breeze, he ran along the Asiatic coast, knowing that the Genoese barks—bound for the Black Sea—steered along that shore. But as he approached the Straits, the wind suddenly veered several points, and, before many hours, blew a heavy gale in from the Archipelago. In the end, he was forced to take shelter under the lee of a low point jutting out from the eastern shore. Several boats passed through the Straits, scudding before the gale, which caused Paoli to keep strict watch for a vessel of sufficient importance, and carrying the Genoese flag, to induce him to give chase.

The fourth day—the gale rather increasing than otherwise—the man on the look-out gave notice of three large vessels making through

the Straits; the largest, a double banked galley, chasing the others, which were shortly perceived—one to be a carrick of the largest class, shewing Venetian colours—the other a fine Greek caravel.

Being prepared, and his crew eager for action, the pilot, by the orders of Paoli, slipped his cables, and, standing across the course of the advancing vessels, hoisted the broad banner of St. Mark. The Genoese galley no sooner became aware of the vicinity of her enemy, than she abandoned the chase, shortened canvas, and prepared for action. She was a larger class galley than our hero's, though, as it proved afterwards, but badly manned, and with a disaffected crew.

In something less than half an hour, the Genoese struck to the Corsican, who had run her aboard at once; and the prize—one of Admiral Doria's finest galleys—turned out a rich one. Having been sent on a month's cruize, she had taken several valuable prizes, which Paoli

learned from some released captives—were all safely anchored in the port of Salonica, awaiting the return of the Genoese galley, who intended, after capturing the Venetian Carrick to return to that port, and then sail with her prizes, and rejoin the Genoese fleet, not expecting to meet any Venetian galley of war in the Sea of Marmora at that time, she had left a third of her crew with the prizes. The Genoese galley was still superior in force to Paoli's; but his usual good fortune and gallantry carried the prize at a very trifling loss. She was commanded by the young Count Durazzo; and many of the volunteers were of the young nobility of Genoa, who offered considerable ransoms for their freedom, which Paoli most willingly agreed to, on reaching Negropont.

But first he was resolved to cut out from the harbour of Salonica the prizes left there by the Count Durazzo. In order to carry his project into execution, he had recourse to a ruse.

Having received the pledged word of each of the Captains—according to the customs of the times—he sent them and their crew aboard his own galley, with a strong body of his men and two able officers to take charge; and, leaving them to shape their course for Negropont, he sailed with the Genoese galley for Salonica.

As soon as the gale subsided, and having arrived off the port, he signalled the four prizes—which he distinctly beheld riding within the pier—to weigh and join him. As he used the signals from the Genoese book of direction, not the slightest suspicion was excited. Salonica was a very strongly defended port; and, without a ruse, it would have been impossible to obtain possession of the prizes. But no sooner had the officers, left in charge, beheld the galley of the Count Durazzo with its banner waving over the poop, and read the signals, than they weighed, and followed their consort, who, shaping his course for Lepanto, where the Genoese fleet were in winter quarters,

led the unsuspicious officers of Durazzo out of sight of Salonica, and then, to their great astonishment and consternation, they fell, one, by one into the snare laid for them. With his very valuable prizes, Paoli made his way to Negropont, where he found his own galley safely moored.

The Corsican, however, learned that Admiral Pisani was at Castello Tornese, one of the most magnificent and gigantic erections raised by the Venetians in their eastern settlements. The Marchese di Loridano, who commanded in the absence of Pisani, received our hero with distinguished attention, and spoke in high terms of his gallantry and extreme good fortune; for one of the prizes contained treasure to a large amount. The Marchese was of opinion that Paoli should proceed at once to Tornese, as the despatches were marked "Important," and for the Admiral himself. Paoli was informed by the Marchese that the fleet would be ready before the winter expired,

and that he had received information that Admiral Doria had already left his winter quarters; therefore it behoved him to keep a careful look-out in steering for Tornese.

The young Genoese nobility, taken in the galley of the Marchese Durazzo, were permitted to charter a neutral bark, having pledged their word not to engage in the then existing war between Genoa and Venice. The ransoms were settled to their mutual satisfaction—for, notwithstanding the deep hatred Paoli so justly bore to Genoa, his natural generosity of disposition was not to be changed even by his bitter feeling against the destroyers of his native land.

Paoli then sailed for Tornese, but variable winds and calms, unusual for the time of year, retarded his progress; and several days were spent in reaching the Island of Cerego. It was near sun-set, as the wind fell, leaving them about a league from Cape St. Angelo. The sun went down, giving to the sky a crimson hue, almost

startling from its vividness, while dark masses of clouds rapidly shewed their heads in the western horizon.

Paoli felt satisfied they would have to contend with a gale before morning; and his pilot, an old and experienced navigator of those seas, was of the same opinion and strongly advised their manning their long and ponderous sweeps, so as to gain a sufficient offing to clear the Cape before them, as the tempest—for tempest he knew it would be—would come from the south.

Paoli himself was inclined (hemmed in as they were by Islands and shoals) to seek anchorage behind the Island of Cerego. Under her sweeps, double manned, the galley gathered way with her head for the Island.

In the mean time our hero paced the deck while his thoughts were far indeed from the scene around him, which soon became wrapped in impenetrable darkness.

Pulini, who followed the fortunes of Paoli

with steady devotion, stood upon the deck, leaning against the mainmast of the galley, and gazing at the powerful form of his lord, seen in the faint light of the two lanterns hoisted over the poop. Pulini loved the island which had given him birth; and would rather have stretched himself on the hard rock of his native mountain by the side of his young lord, and struggled for Corsican liberty—even though he should perish in doing so—than follow him through the brilliant exploits he achieved under the banner of St. Mark. The faithful squire longed for some intelligence from Corsica. He was well aware that a thousand men were ready to start up and struggle again against their oppressors, if the slightest change took place in the Genoese government. Pulini also looked anxiously to the result of the contest between Genoa and Venice; for, should Venice succeed in annihilating the Genoese fleet, the resources of that republic would receive a great shock.

A profound stillness reigned around, broken only by the fall of the ponderous sweeps; a long low swell began to be felt; and the air, before cool, became sultry and oppressive. In the silence of the night, the fall of the swell against the iron-bound coast of Cerego, fell distinctly upon the ear. Just then, the Pilot pointed out to his commander, a small unsteady light, resembling a star.

"That," said he, "is the Pharo of Cerego—a very lofty tower, built upon a sharp disjointed rock. We must not attempt that harbour, Signor, if the gale bursts upon us, as I fear it will. You see how quick the swell comes; the tempest is on the waters, though, as yet, we do not feel it. Hark!" continued he, after a pause. He then shouted, "in oars—in oars—be quick!"

As he spoke, there was a roar aloft, unlike any other sound; and then the galley was struck by the furious blast, bending her beneath the instantaneously foaming sea, while a drift

of ocean spray rushed over her deck, like a cataract. The galley shook and quivered beneath the shock; and, before she could recover herself, or her crew could regain their control over her, a flash of blue quivering flame ran along her deck, and then burst at the foot of the foremast, bringing it, and its ponderous yard, a wreck over the side. The crash of thunder that followed this vivid and fatal flash or meteor—for four of the seamen were killed—astonished and bewildered, the galley's crew; but Paoli, with his energetic officers and pilot, roused them into action, and, in a few seconds, they got the galley to scud before the blast.

Another peal of thunder, more appalling than the last, changed the direction of the tempest like magic. A kind of whirlwind fell upon the waters driving them in all directions like snow-drift, into the air. The heavens, at the same time, were one vast sheet of flame, disclosing to view the before

calm sea—tossed and agitated by the war of the elements. In vain the labouring ship recovered from one shock—to be met by the capricious hurricane in an opposite direction.

At length, when fearfully near the western point of Cerego, the tempest seemed to settle into the south west, and the thunder to roll away in the distance—away went the galley, like a scared sea-bird, her startled crew relieved by the change in the wind which enabled them to avoid the rock-bound coast of Cerego; when, in a vivid flash of lightning, the man on the look-out, shouted—

"A craft under our starboard bow!"

The next moment, the galley struck some object with tremendous force, reeling and staggering with the shock. Giacinto Paoli was standing, at the moment, near the pilot, who, with another man, held the helm. The crash threw him against the bulwarks. The galley broaching to, a breaking sea filled her decks with a flood of water.

For a moment our hero believed the galley to be sinking; but, regaining his feet, he called his bewildered offiers and crew to their senses, and, after considerable exertion, the vessel was again got before the wind. Such was the fury of the storm, that not a sail could be set which was not torn into ribbons. Flash after flash lighted the ocean round; but nought was to be seen except the crested tops of the breakers—nothing to be heard but the howling of the pitiless gale, as it raged throgh the rigging, and bent the vessel beneath the surge.

"I greatly fear," said Paoli to a Venetian who acted in the capacity of what we should call a supercargo, but who, in reality, was a paid spy—"I fear we have run down some unfortunate bark."

"If so, Signor," returned the man, "the people on board her have perished, as not a vestige of her can be seen."

"There is no doubt," observed the pilot, coming from an examination of the galley's

beak, "that we have run down some craft. Our bow is damaged a little, and some of the frame-work carried away. We had better, Signor, run into the anchorage between Sapienza and Sphacteria."

This advice our young commander followed, and just as morning dawned, they came to an anchor under Sapienza, in the port of Modon, a safe and commodious harbour, where, in a couple of days, he repaired his damages. But when prepared to set sail, a small fleet, consisting of four galleys, two or three brigantines, and a very large zebec, appeared off the islands; and as the breeze still blew strongly from the south and west, the fleet came to an anchor under the island of Sphacteria. The zebec, however, kept under sail, lying to off the entrance of the sound.

Giacinto easily made out that this fleet was a Genoese reinforcement for the fleet of Admiral Doria. Finding that they remained at anchor, he determined to attempt the passage

through the sound during the night, resolving to give battle to the zebec, if pursued. Accordingly, with a strong breeze in his favour. and a very dark night, he weighed anchor, and sailed from the port of Modon, without, as he thought, being perceived by the galleys, as they were invisible to him—and steered for the sound. But it seems the Genoese sailors had discovered that a large Venetian vessel lay in the port of Modon, which, at the period of our story, was strongly fortified, and in the hands of the Greeks; for scarcely had The Lion attempted to pass between the flat rock and the island of Sapienza, than a stout cable, stretched by buoys across the gut, caught their bows; and which, though it at once parted, was evidently fastened to one of the brigantines lying at anchor in the sound; for instantaneously a bright crimson flame shot up into the air, and the moment after, a clear blue flame was shown from the poops of all the four vessels, revealing every object around

with a startling distinctness. Paoli cast a rapid and comprehensive glance around him: he perceived that the zebec was within bow-shot to leeward, and that two of the galleys—very large ones—were both to windward, and that they had at once slipped their cables, and were running down upon him. In this critical situation our hero was still undismayed: he could not return, if inclined, and beat back through the narrow passage; but, knowing the swiftness of his own craft, and the spirit and energy of his crew, he did not at all despair of extricating himself from his critical position.

As the fires were continually kept up on board the enemy's vessels, he was able to judge pretty exactly their situation; but the zebec, which seemed to sail remarkably fast, by catching the wind in a slant from the land, came right across his course. She appeared to be full of men, for when within half bow-shot, a shower of shafts and bolts from cross-bows and

arbalets fell upon The Lion's deck; but the men received no injury, because of the obscurity and uncertainty of the aim. The zebec then thought to run The Lion aboard; but just as the collision between the vessels appeared inevitable, and would have given time to the foremost galley to close with them, The Lion went rapidly about, and, having cleared the sound, bore away. But not in time to avoid the galley to windward. Grapnels and all the instruments then used in ancient warfare were cast aboard The Lion by the galley as she ran along-side, but were as instantly cast back; and the breeze blowing very fresh, and the point of the island being cleared, The Lion stood away from her baffled enemies, though hotly pursued by the three galleys and the zebec.

Unfortunately, the mast shipped at Modon was much too slight for the ponderous latine yard carried by The Lion, but none stouter was to be had; and the new rigging being slack, a

heavy squall and the great sea outside the islands, where the gale still raged, carried away The Lion's foremast, yard and all, over the side.

This was a sad, and not to be remedied disaster. The wreck was, however, cleared away, and the vessel, under her immense mainsail, sailed fast through the heavy and breaking seas. Towards morning the wind increased, but so well did The Lion sail, that she still kept ahead of her pursuers. As the day rose, the islands of Sapienza were scarcely visible, while Zante and Cephalonia began to appear like little dark specks in the Eastern horizon.

The largest of the Genoese vessels was, however, gaining on our hero, and to his surprise, the zebec kept up with her. They were nearly within bow-shot, and he could see that the deck of the latter was crowded with soldiers destined for some of the Colonies in the East.

Still it was not till within a few leagues of Zante that the galley and the zebec came up with their chase. The former was, however, at this period, considerably ahead of her comrade and commenced the fight as usual with arrows, bolts and stones thrown from engines. But Paoli (determined to make a desperate fight) suddenly ordered the helm to be put down; and carrying an immense press of after-sail, bore up in the wind. Striking he Genoese galley amid-ships with tremendous force, and taken immediately aback with an immense press of canvass, both her masts went over the side; by using his immense sweeps, and great exertion, our hero got The Lion again before the wind before the zebec could close. Thus he was able to prepare for his other enemy crippled as he was, and not having his full complement of men aboard.

Just as the zebec appeared ready to run along-side The Lion, a scene of great confusion

seemed to prevail on board, in the midst of which Paoli, luffed up, and with a chosen part of his crew, as the vessels closed, leaped aboard, battle-axe in hand. He was encountered by an officer in handsome armour, whom he felled to the deck; and, gallantly assisted by his lieutenant, drove the astounded Genoese before him. With loud cries—the soldiers threw down their arms, and demanded quarter, some of them, at the same time, pulling down the Genoese flag.

Their officers were furious; but the men, who had mutinied twice before as they were destined to garrison one of the most unhealthy settlements in the east—refused to strike another blow.

Having secured his prize, and received the arms of the officers in command, he bore down on the disabled galley, which after a sharp, but short, hand-to-hand conflict, surrended.

Taking her in tow, The Lion crowded all sail for Zante, the two other vessels being

several miles to leward. These were evidently very dull sailers; for he was able to run into Zante, with his prize in tow, just as the leading galley came within bow-shot.

After arranging every thing with respect to his prizes, which were extremely valuable, he at once set out for the then—considered impregnable fortress of Castello Tornese where Admiral Pisani then was—

The remains of this stupendour fortress still exist. It is built upon an emminence overlooking the vast plains of Gastorini. From the ramparts of this magnificent edifice, the eye ranges over a vast expanse of sea, studded with those islands now know as the Ionian—Zante lying, as it were, beneath the walls; while, to the eastward, the delighted gaze roams over a fairy scene as far as the beautiful gulf of Lepanto, while the mountains of Arcadia and Epirus bound a vast portion of this unrivalled amphitheatre.

Admiral Pisani received Paoli most courteously; complimented him on his gallantry and great success; made many inquiries concerning the state of the Greek vessels in Byzantium, and other matters.

At the expiration of three days, Paoli shipped a number of artizans and sailors, and to his great joy, received orders to sail for Byzantium with directions to the younger Pisani to expedite, as much as possible, the equipment of the Emperor s contingent, as the Admiral fully expected, before the winter expired, to meet the hostile fleet under Admiral Doria.

In parting, Admiral Pisani said, "Signor Paoli, it has turned out fortunate, both for your renown and emolument, that my nephew forwarded his despatches by you. But, in point of fact, they were not of sufficient importance to risk the capture of your noble galley, by running the gauntlet through the numerous cruizers the Genoese have in those

seas at present. In the month of January, I fully expect to be at anchor off the Port of Byzantium."

Our hero again set sail, leaving his prizes under an officer of inspection, appointed by the Admiral; and after several very narrow escapes from the cruizers of Genoa who kept the seas the whole winter, and sinking a large Genoese caravel full of warlike stones proceeding to Caffa, he arrived safely in the Port of Byzantium.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RIVAL LOVERS.

THERE was no mistaking the bright smile or the sparkling eyes of the fair Agnes as she met her lover after his return from his expedition. She had much to relate to her betrothed; for, during his absence, events had taken place which disturbed her mind. Knowing, with all a woman's acuteness, the fiery and hasty temper of the Corsican, she somewhat hesitated; till strengthened in her resolution by the advice of her kind friend the Signora

Tolmeo, she resolved to speak fully to her lover upon the subject that disturbed her; first anxiously entreating Paoli, to give her his promise that he would not resent the inconsiderate conduct of Giovanni Pisani, who to do him justice, was not aware of the betrothment of Paoli and Agnes. Passionately attached to the maiden while a mere boy, he had sailed from Venice, with the resolution of offering himself to the Merchant's daughter. Her reception of the Corsican, which he had himself witnessed, rather startled him from his self confidence; for Pisani's chief failing was pride. Still, imagining that if Paoli was removed from the presence of Agnes, he (Pisani) should have a chance of winning her love, he craftily sent his rival on an expedition in which he felt almost certain the young commander would be captured by the numerous cruizers of Doria in the Archipelago.

After the departure of the Corsican, Pisani became more earnest in his manner; and as

his motive was soon evident to Agnes—for women are quick to perceive when the heart is concerned—she became more distant and reserved. Still the young Count was not to be repulsed: his pride would not allow him to think that a Corsican exile, with no other fortune than his sword, could be preferred to him, a Venetian, with a name ennobled through centuries, possessing immense wealth, and having already distinguished himself in several brilliant actions.

But Agnes, was not to be won by a handsome person, a noble name, or wealth. Her first romantic meeting with Paoli had certainly kindled the first spark of love in her breast. No doubt, it would, in time, have been extinguished, had not the letters of her cousin Paulina fanned the spark. At length the arrival of the knight himself, blew the weak light into a flame; and a more intimate knowledge of his mind and disposition, added to an unrivalled figure and handsome features,

increased the feeling that had so long fluttered in her gentle bosom.

Pisani offerred himself and fortune to the Merchant's daughter. Agnes kindly, but firmly, rejected his proposals; but, with obstinate infatuation, the Venetian persisted, and then the maiden candidly declared her affection for, and engagement with, Paoli.

In the moment of disappointed passion, and giving way to a temper that too often overpowered a naturally generous disposition, Pisani upbraided Agnes with bestowing her love upon a Corsican adventurer, who was not only stigmatised as a rebel, but suffering under a state sentence of banishment.

"You have risked your happiness, lady," he added, in a bitter, exasperated tone, "upon a quicksand. The galleys of Genoa now sweep the eastern seas; and this wandering Knight may pass the remainder of his days in hopeless captivity."

Gentle and mild in disposition and temper, Agnes was still not without pride and spirit, both of which were roused by the unfeeling speech of the Venetian, who bitterly repented the utterance the moment after. She rose haughtily from her seat, casting a look of scorn upon the agitated and unhappy Pisani—saying, as her hand rested upon the door—

"I am not surprised, Signor." And the tone of her voice, cold and cutting, went to the heart of the Venetian. "To you, then, as I surmised, does the noble Paoli owe this dangerous voyage. Be satisfied. His gratitude will equal the benefit conferred. We meet, Signor Pisani, for the last time beneath my father's roof. You have raised no fear within my breast for him, whom my own heart and my father's wishes have chosen for my husband. Providence will protect him whom your false friendship has sought to betray."

Before the repentant Pisani could reply, the maiden was gone.

"She is gone!" muttered Pisani; "and she thinks me a villain. Yes!" And he bit his lip in passion. "Giovanni Pisani has earned the title. Curses on my weak brain and false pride, which have brought this stain upon my hitherto fair name! But I will see Agnes. I will implore her forgiveness; and if the friend I have betrayed falls by the snare I, like a coward, laid for him, adieu to the world! For Giovanni Pisani scorns life coupled with dishonor."

And, with a hurried step, he left the mansion of the Signor Alviano.

But in vain the Venetian sought permission to see the indignant maiden; though her pride and spirit scorned to let Pisani see she trembled at the danger her lover ran, in prosecuting his voyage, yet, in secret, she grieved, and thought over the probable disasters he might incur.

Such, excepting Pisani's soliloquy, which she could not not know, though we have communicated it to the reader, was the substance of what the Merchant's daughter communicated to Paoli on his return; but the expressions and terms applied to him by Pisani, she kept to herself.

As Agnes concluded and looked anxiously in her lover's face, in which she saw no trace whatever of anger, a kiss was pressed upon her blooming cheek, which made the colour richer still.

"Be assured, beloved Agnes," said Paoli, "I feel no resentment against my friend Pisani. Do you think, dearest, to lose such a treasure as this—" and his arm gently encircled the waist of the maiden—"would not try even so noble a heart as Pisani's? It was but a *ruse d' amour;* and it has, in the end, not only enriched me, but," he added, gaily, "crowned me with laurels. Not one word of reproach shall Pisani receive from me. Is it

not triumph enough that the exile of Corsica —the banished of Venice—obtains what the noble and wealthy Pisani sued for in vain"

That same evening, Giacinto was seated in his cabin, arranging some papers and charts, and pointing out places to his lieutenant—an officer of the name of Loredani—to whom, for his gallantry and steadiness, he was getting much attached, when the Count Pisani entered the cabin—for the galley lay along-side the quay of the Arsenal. Paoli rose to meet him. He had not seen him since his arrival, as Pisani was absent.

The Signor Loredani left the cabin as the Count entered.

Paoli, with a kindly greeting, held out his hand. The Venetian shook his head, saying—

"Mine is not worthy, Signor Paoli, to meet the palm of an honorable man. I have wronged you, Paoli," he added, with bitter-

ness; "and I come to offer the only reparation one man can give another—satisfaction at the sword's point."

"Nay, Pisani," replied the Corsican, with a smile, "let us keep our swords' points for the bodies of our enemies. Believe me, we should feel no pleasure in the encounter. We are all, in moments of passion, liable to err. You have done everything that is required of an honourable man. Give me your hand, Pisani. It's a noble hand, belongs to a noble heart. Let our friendship, from this time, be too firmly established to be again disturbed."

"You are generous, Paoli, as well as noble," replied Pisani, as he pressed the hand so freely offered. "The day may come when Giovanni Pisani may wash out this blot upon his escutcheon."

In a short time, the gay and high-spirited Corsican drove the gloom from the brow of the sensitive Venetian. He also promised to make his peace with Agnes. The rest of the evening

was spent pleasantly enough by the reconciled friends.

On the following day, the Signor Alviano returned from Scutari, where he had spent the last week, closing accounts with some merchants resident there. He was rejoiced on seeing Paoli; for though the merchant, to quell the anxiety of his daughter, had said there was little risk in Paoli's voyage, yet he felt, in private, considerable doubt with respect to its fortunate termination. He therefore received the Corsican with all the affection of a parent, and listened to his account of his adventures with interest and surprise.

"I have nearly closed all my mercantile transactions here," continued Alviano; "and with much satisfaction after so many years residence. If this plaguy war was terminated, I should be ready in less than two months to sail for Venice. This new law of the Venetian rulers, will also put an end to the Marchese Tiepolo's mercantile transactions."

"How so, Signor?" demanded Paoli.

"Why," replied Alviano, "it is now ordained by a decree of the Senate, that no Venetian nobleman shall embark in commercial pursuits."

"What a singular act of tyranny, father!" exclaimed Agnes. "What, on earth, could be the cause of such an arbitrary decree?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the merchant, patting his daughter's cheek. "We must put a bridle upon your little tongue when we get to Venice. No one dares in Venice to couple the word tyranny with the rulers of the people."

"But what can be the meaning of this new decree?" questioned the Corsican.

"Its direct tendency," replied Alviano, "is, I suppose, to prevent the accumulation of wealth in new hands; and thus preserve the ascendancy of those families by whom power is already obtained. The new laws regulating dress, will, I feel certain, be very unpopular. Even the table, and personal expenses of each

rank of citizens, is now to be under the inspection of three especial magistrates. The cloak of the richest noble, as well as of the meanest citizen, is henceforth to be made of Paduan cloth; and a heavy penalty is imposed upon the use of English, Spanish, or Dutch manufacture. Another piece of news I have also heard," continued the merchant. War is declared with Louis of Hungary; and Zara has again revolted. So you see, altogether, the rulers of Venice will have no easy task to guide the helm of state."

"Giovanni Gradinegro, the Doge who succeeded to the blood-stained throne of the ill-starred Faliero," said Paoli, "will not sit upon a bed of roses, with all these misfortunes crowding upon him. At all events, I heartily wish the coming winter over. The inactivity and delay in the contest that must take place between the rival fleets, is wearisome."

"*Per bacco*, my son," remarked the merchant,

with a smile, "you cannot complain of being inactive. By Jove, during this last voyage, your prizes have more than cleared all the expenses of the outfit and building of The Lion. What amount did you fix for the ransom of the Count Durazzo, and the five other nobles?"

"I left the amount to the Count himself," replied Paoli; and I consider the sum offered—two hundred thousand livres of Genoa—a very liberal amount for the Count and his fellow captives."

"You would make but a poor merchant in the way of barter, my son," observed the merchant, smiling. What sum do you think did Doria demand, ay, and obtain, for the Marchese de Contarini and the Count Delfino, taken with three hundred prisoners of no note, to judge by the amount demanded? One hundred thousand scudi of Genoa for each of the nobles, and five thousand livres of Genoa for the three hundred commoners. The Count

Durazzo, your prisoner, is the only son of the great Marchese Durazzo, the wealthiest noble in the state of Genoa. Why, my dear boy, you ought to have demanded the price of the fifty Corsican towns and villages sacked, burned, and destroyed, when his father commanded the forces of Genoa, in their descent upon Corsica, about the period of your birth. He was finally, however, driven from the island by the gallantry and heroic exertions of your lamented father."

"Paoli looked at the kindling eye of the worthy merchant, who spoke in a tone of energy unusual to him.

"You surprise me, my dear sir," said Paoli. "Your interest in, and knowledge of, the events that have taken place in my beloved but unfortunate, country, has struck me forcibly before now—"

"Nothing surprising," returned the merchant, smiling, "in my being interested in the

country of my beloved child's future husband. And as to my knowledge of events, your Squire Pulini would chatter for hours over the wrongs of Corsica. But come with me. If I leave you so much with my little girl, she will make you work, as Hercules did of old, at a distaff."

"No fear of that, father," replied Agnes, laughing, "I assure you, even now, he is longing to try his favorite Lion against the wooden bulwarks of Genoa. Is it not so, Giacinto?"

"Even so, sweet Agnes. But why? This contest ended, this little hand, you know, becomes mine."

"Ah!" ejaculated the maiden, and somehow she lost her playful manner, and the tone of her voice fell, "I dread these next few months. I hate war, and its horrors. Its pomps, and its gorgeous outward show are but miserable masks to hide its deformities and the

misery attending it. And I cannot divest my mind of a conviction," added she, as the Knight kissed the small fingers he held in his, "that much is before us of bitter trial."

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